

MARVEL

EPIC COLLECTION

THE MICRONAUTS

THE ORIGINAL MARVEL YEARS



BOB LAYTON

HOME SWEET HOMEWORLD
MANTLO • BRODERICK

EPIC COLLECTION



THE MICRONAUTS

THE ORIGINAL MARVEL YEARS

HOME SWEET HOMEWORLD

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HOME SWEET HOMEWORLD

- MICRONAUTS #21, SEPT. 1980*
- 6** "SAY IT WITH FLOWERS!"
- 19** "TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!"

- MICRONAUTS #22, OCT. 1980*
- 24** "THE BEST DARNED BURGLAR IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!"
- 37** "HOMEWORLD!"

- MICRONAUTS #23, NOV. 1980*
- 42** "FIELD TRIP!"
- 55** "INSIDE THE HOMEWORLD MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR!"
- 59** "PHAROID!"
- 64** "A MIGHTY MARVEL BONUS POSTER"

- MICRONAUTS #24, DEC. 1980*
- 66** "COMPUTREX!"
- 82** "MAP OF HOMEWORLD"
- 84** "AEGYPTA!"

- MICRONAUTS ANNUAL #2, 1980*
- 90** "THE TERRIBLE TOYMASTER!"
- 121** "MEET THE MICRONAUTS"

- MICRONAUTS #25, JAN. 1981*
- 126** "DEATHBIRTH!"
- 143** "THE ORIGIN OF BARON KARZA!"

- MICRONAUTS #26, FEB. 1981*
- 150** "ASSAULT ON S.H.I.E.L.D."
- 167** "TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!"
- 174** *MICRONAUTS #27, MAR. 1981*
"TO SNARE MEN'S SOULS!"

- 198** *MICRONAUTS #28, APR. 1981*
"...LAST STAND IN FANTASY-WORLD!"

- 222** *MICRONAUTS #29, MAY 1981*
"TO SLEEP...PERCHANCE TO DREAM!"

- 246** *MICRONAUTS #30, JUNE 1981*
"HOME SWEET HOMEWORLD!"

- 271** *MICRONAUTS #31, JULY 1981*
"MY BODY LIES OVER OCEANIA"

- 294** *MICRONAUTS #32, AUG. 1981*
"SNOWBLIND"

- 318** *MICRONAUTS #33, SEPT. 1981*
"TROPICA!"

- 342** *MICRONAUTS #34, OCT. 1981*
"BETRAYAL!"

- 366** *MICRONAUTS #35, NOV. 1981*
"THE ORIGIN OF THE MICROVERSE!"

- MARVEL PREVIEW #4, JAN. 1976*
- 407** "INTRODUCTION...THE SWORD IN THE STAR"

- 410** "STAVE 1: THE SEEDS OF MAN!"

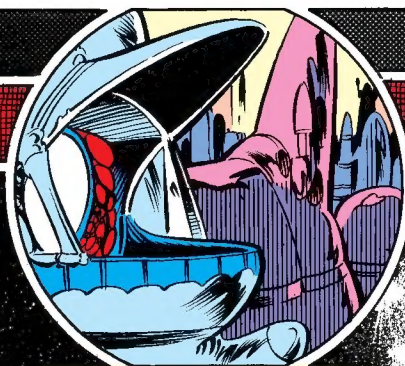
- MARVEL PREVIEW #7, SUMMER 1976*
- 430** "JUST A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO TODAY"

- 432** "STAVE 2: WITCH WORLD!"



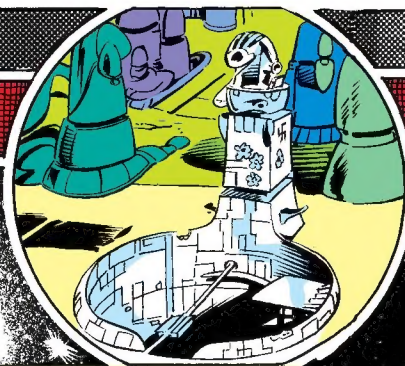
FIRST ZONE: The ROYAL CITY

ELEGANT SPIRES RISE HIGH INTO THE OCHER SKIES, A CITY OF BEAUTY HIDING THE MISERY OF THE LOWER LEVELS FOREVER IN DARKNESS BELOW



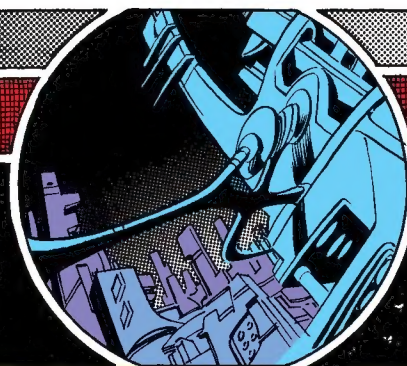
FIRST ZONE: The ROYAL PALACE

RESIDENCE OF EVERY KING AND QUEEN OF HOMEWORLD SINCE THE REIGN OF LORD DALLAN RANN AND LADY SEPSIS



FIRST ZONE: The BODY BANKS

FOR 1,000 YEARS THE POWER-CENTER OF HOMEWORLD-- FROM HERE THE TYRANNICAL BARON KARZA RULED THE MICROVERSE UNTIL HIS OVERTHROW



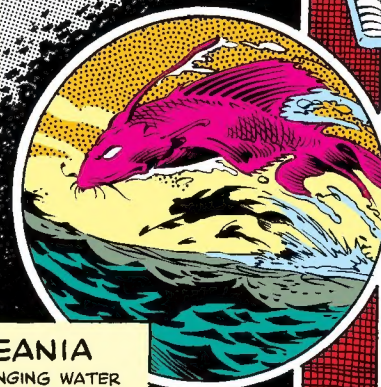
INDUSTRIAL ZONE

OUT OF HUMAN SIGHT, ROBIDS MANUFACTURE THE PLANET'S MACHINES AND SERVICE ITS VAST STAR-SPANNING SPACE FLEET



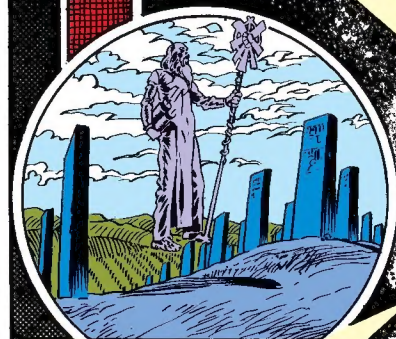
FARM ZONE

HERE, TOO, ROBIDS SELFLESSLY SERVE MANKIND BY GROWING FOOD FOR HOMEWORLD AND FOR EXPORT THROUGHOUT THE MICROVERSE



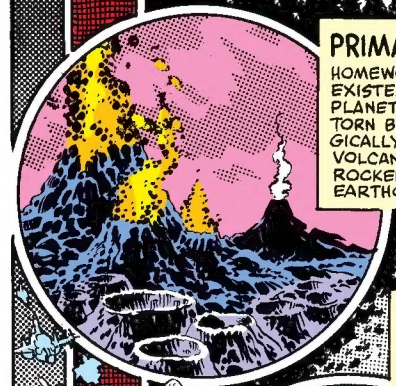
OCEANIA

A WIDE-RANGING WATER WORLD INHABITED BY ALL MANNER OF SEA LIFE AND, SOME SAY, BY A MYSTERIOUS RACE OF MERMEN



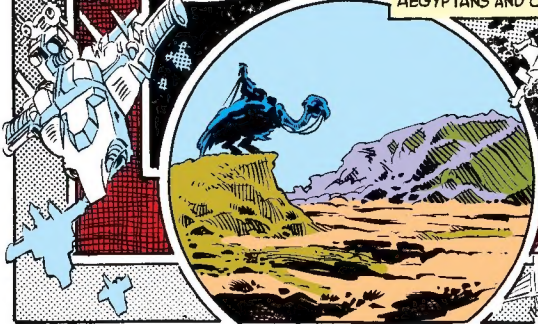
The DEAD ZONE

FINAL RESTING PLACE OF HOMEWORLD'S CITIZENRY



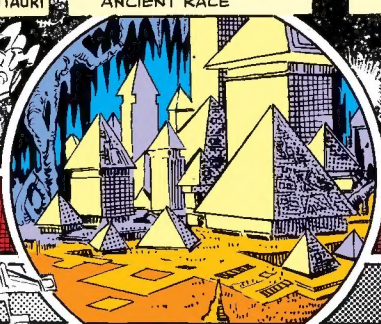
PRIMAL ZONE

HOMEWORLD AS IT EXISTED AT THE PLANET'S BIRTH-- TORN BY GEOLOGICALLY ACTIVE VOLCANOES AND ROCKED BY EARTHQUAKES



SANDZONE

THE CYANITE DESERT, SPARSELY INHABITED BY THE WARRING AEGYPTANS AND CENTAURI



AEGYPTA

WHERE PHAROIDS AND HIS DESERT DEMONS DWELL, DESCENDED FROM AN ANCIENT RACE



TROPICA

AN UNEXPLORED JUNGLE ZONE-- IT IS SAID THAT HERE ARE MONSTERS



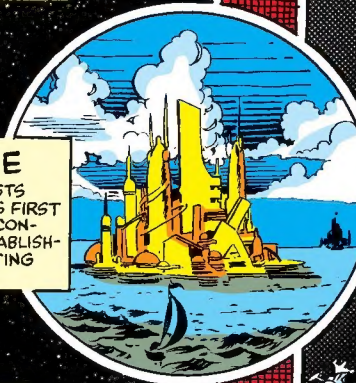
POLARIA

HOMEWORLD'S POLAR REGIONS NEVER KNOW SUNLIGHT OR WARMTH...



SUBZERO ZONE

...YET THEY HARBOR A HARDY RACE OF HUNTERS WHO DWELL IN SHIMMERING PALACES OF ICE

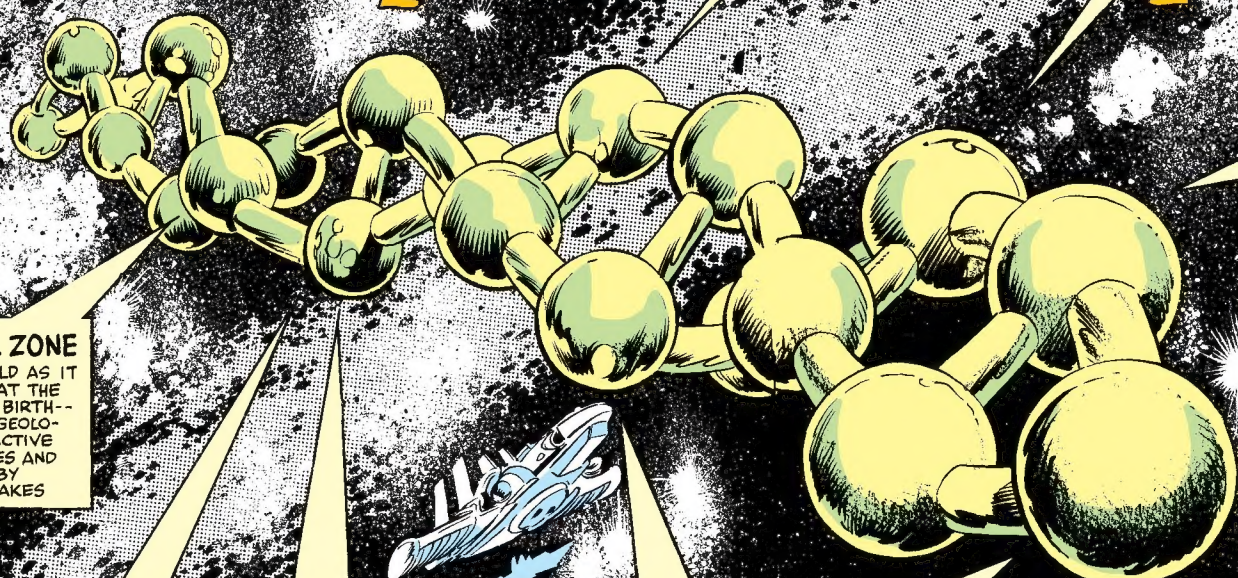


SEA ZONE

AGES AGO, COLONISTS FROM HOMEWORLD'S FIRST ZONE SET OUT TO CONQUER OCEANIA, ESTABLISHING ELEGANT FLOATING CITIES

MAP OF HOMEWORLD

THE MOLECULAR CENTER OF THE SUBATOMIC MICROVERSE



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(DETAILS INSIDE)



THE MICRONAUTS

STARTING THIS ISSUE:
TALES FROM THE
MICROVERSE!



Commander Rand. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Biotron. Microtron. They came from inner space — from a sub-atomic solar system known as the Microverse — six tiny titans in search of adventure on worlds beyond their own!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

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PAT BRODERICK
ARTISTNAUT

ARMANDO GIL
INKERNAUT

TOM ORZECOWSKI, letters
BARRY GROSSMAN, colors

MILGROM/JONES
EDITORNAUTS

JIM SHOOTER
MACRONAUT

LOST ON EARTH!



SEPARATED FROM HIS COMRADES, THE EVER-FAITHFUL BIOTRON LABORS TO REPAIR THE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS ON THE CRIPPLED MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR!



MEANWHILE, MICROTRON, CILICIA, ACROYEAR AND BUG SCOUR THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE--

-- LOOKING FOR COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN AND MARIONETTE, BOTH OF WHOM DISAPPEARED DURING LAST ISSUE'S SUPERMARKET SKIRMISH WITH ODD JOHN'S INSECT ARMY!

HOW COULD THE MICRONAUTS KNOW THAT THEIR TEAMMATES HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT WITH THE TRASH???

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS!

HOW'S BUSINESS AT FAWN'S FLORA, FAWN?

NOT GOOD, SID -- BUT I'VE A FEELING THINGS ARE GOING TO PICK UP!

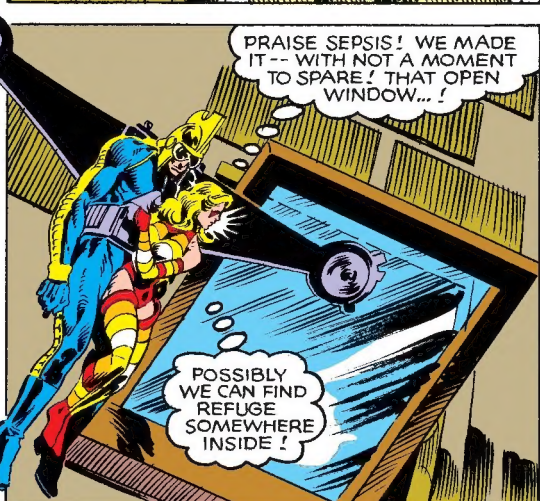
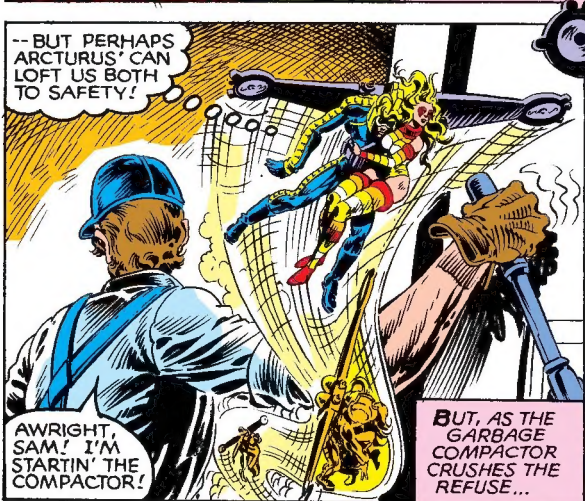
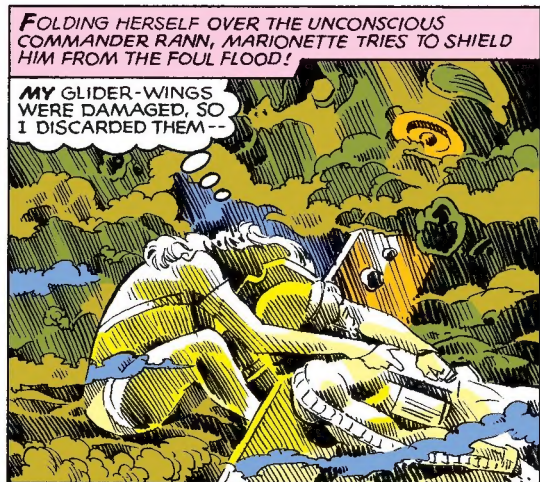
HEY, THAT'S OUR LINE!

THE STENCH OF ROTTING REFUSE ROUSED ME-- BUT ARCTURUS IS STILL UNCONSCIOUS!

I MUST GET HIM TO SAFETY!



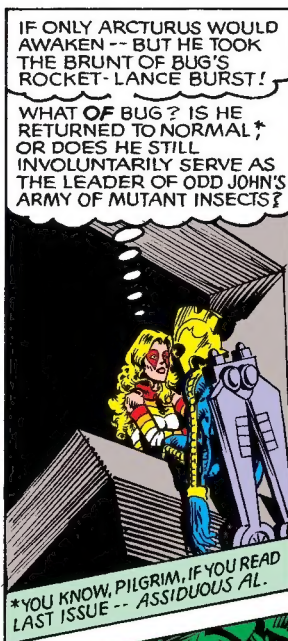
MEANWHILE, DIRE EVENTS THREATEN THE MICRONAUTS' HOMEWORLD WITH IMMINENT DISASTER IN THE ALL-NEW BACKUP FEATURE--
TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!





SEE YOU TOMORROW, BOYS.

SO FAR, SO GOOD! WE ARE AS YET UNSEEN!



IF ONLY ARCTURUS WOULD AWAKEN -- BUT HE TOOK THE BRUNT OF BUG'S ROCKET-LANCE BURST!

WHAT OF BUG? IS HE RETURNED TO NORMAL? OR DOES HE STILL INVOLUNTARILY SERVE AS THE LEADER OF ODD JOHN'S ARMY OF MUTANT INSECTS?

*YOU KNOW, PILGRIM, IF YOU READ LAST ISSUE -- ASSIDUOUS AL.



AND WHAT OF THE REST OF THE MICRONAUTS?

DID THEY ALSO SURVIVE THE FIGHT -- OR ARE ARCTURUS AND I LOST ON THIS WORLD ALONE?

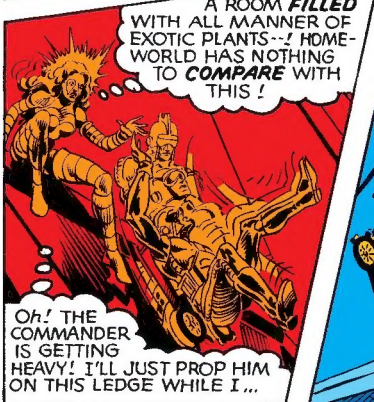
SEPSIS' SHROUD, WHERE ARE WE NOW??



AN ASTONISHING SIGHT GREETED THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUT.

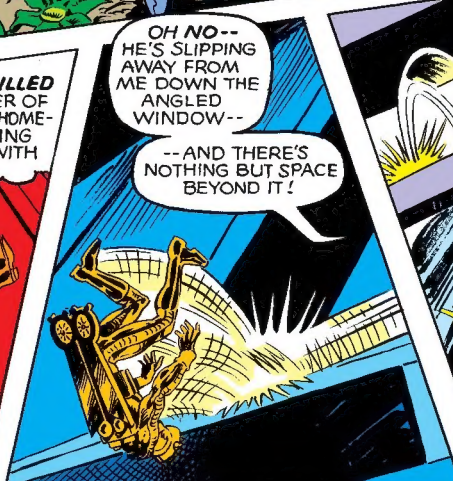
SHE HAS SEEN MANY WONDERS SINCE LEAVING HER MICROSCOPIC UNIVERSE IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE --

-- BUT FEW TO COMPARE WITH THE VAST VISTA OF VEGETATION THAT FILLS THE ROOM BEFORE HER!



A ROOM FILLED WITH ALL MANNER OF EXOTIC PLANTS --! HOME-WORLD HAS NOTHING TO COMPARE WITH THIS!

OH! THE COMMANDER IS GETTING HEAVY! I'LL JUST PROP HIM ON THIS LEDGE WHILE I...

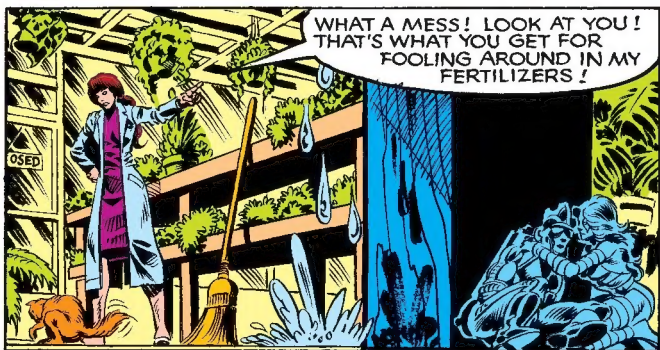
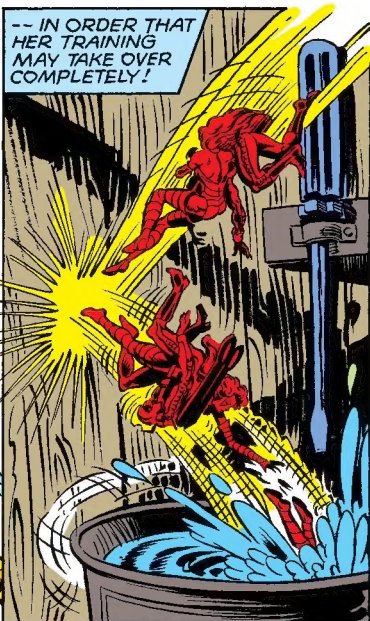


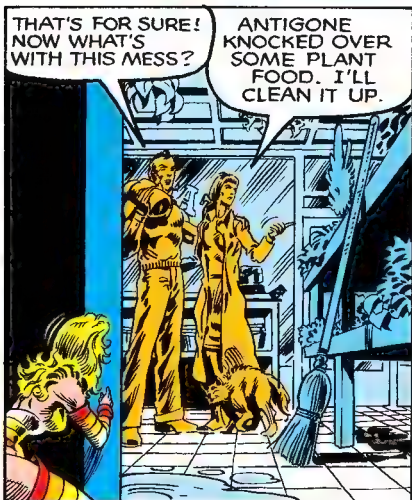
OH NO -- HE'S SLIPPING AWAY FROM ME DOWN THE ANGLED WINDOW --

-- AND THERE'S NOTHING BUT SPACE BEYOND IT!

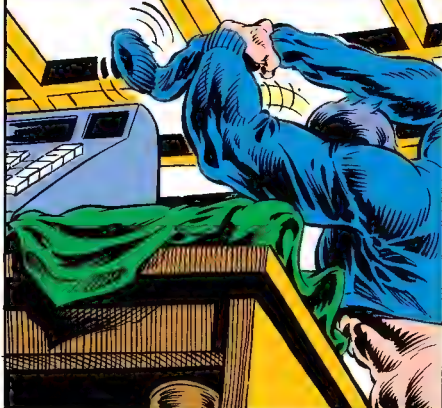


HE'D NEVER SURVIVE A FALL FROM THIS HEIGHT!





PERHAPS IF MARIONETTE HAD CONTINUED TO WATCH AS SAM SMITHERS BEGAN TO CHANGE FROM HIS STREET-CLOTHES--



-- SHE WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED AN EXPLANATION FOR HER INTUITIVE DISLIKE OF HIM SOONER!

AS IT IS, SHE IS DISTRACTED BY A MAN SHE DOES LIKE!

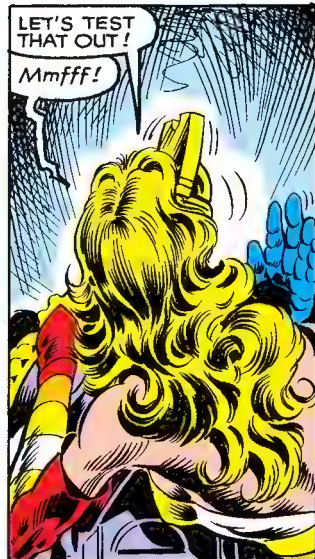
ARCTURUS, YOU'RE AWAKE!

AM I?



LET'S TEST THAT OUT!

Mmfff!



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! DREAMS DON'T KISS LIKE THAT!

Oh, YOU--!

WHERE ARE WE? THE LAST THING I REMEMBER IS THE SUPERMARKET CLASH-- THE RENEGADE BUG BLASTING US--!

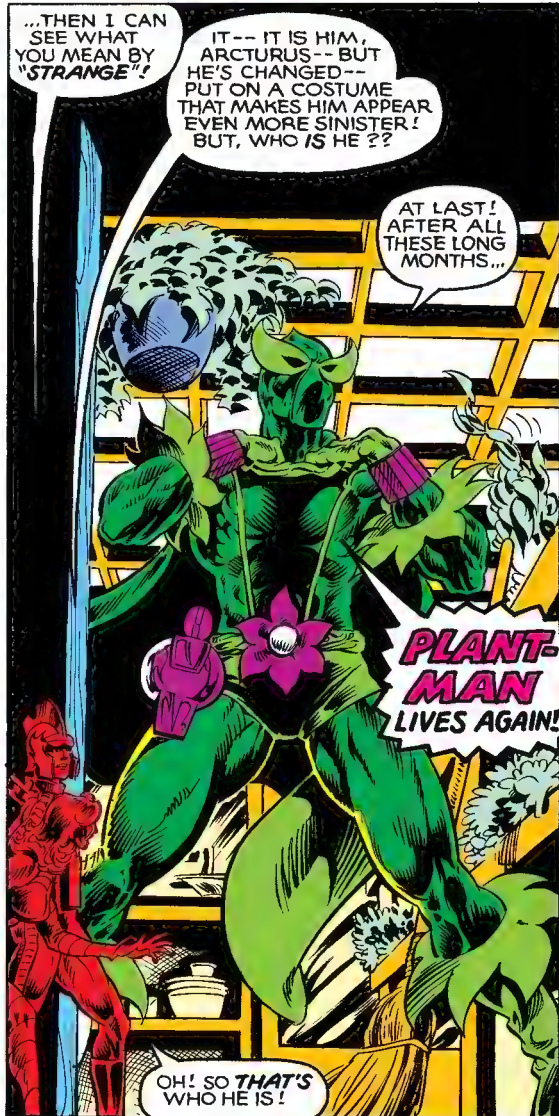
A LOT'S HAPPENED SINCE THEN! I THINK WE'RE IN SOME KIND OF GREENHOUSE--



...THEN I CAN SEE WHAT YOU MEAN BY "STRANGE"!

IT-- IT IS HIM, ARCTURUS-- BUT HE'S CHANGED-- PUT ON A COSTUME THAT MAKES HIM APPEAR EVEN MORE SINISTER! BUT, WHO IS HE ??

AT LAST! AFTER ALL THESE LONG MONTHS...



PLANT-MAN
LIVES AGAIN!



-- RUN BY A NICE-SEEMING WOMAN AND A VERY STRANGE MAN!

IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HIM...

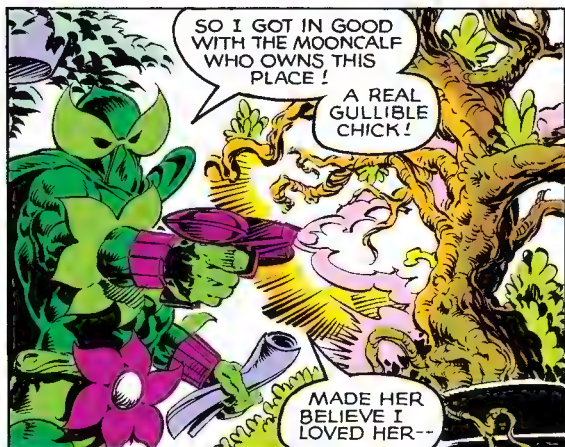
OH! SO *THAT'S* WHO HE IS!

AS THE MARVELING MICRONAUTS EAVESDROP, HE WHO CALLS HIMSELF PLANT-MAN EXTRACTS A BLUEPRINT FROM HIS BEDROLL ...

THE PLANS OF THIS ENTIRE BLOCK, STOLEN FROM THE LOCAL LIBRARY!



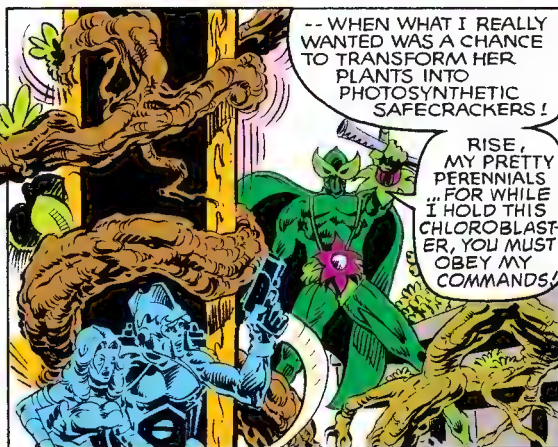
AS I SUSPECTED, THEY REVEALED THAT THIS PENNYNANTE PLANT STORE IS ADJACENT TO THE VAULT OF THE BANK NEXT DOOR!



SO I GOT IN GOOD WITH THE MOONCALF WHO OWNS THIS PLACE!

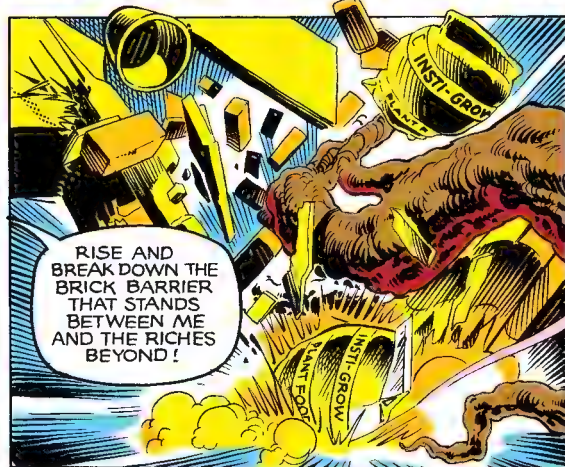
A REAL GULLIBLE CHICK!

MADE HER BELIEVE I LOVED HER--



-- WHEN WHAT I REALLY WANTED WAS A CHANCE TO TRANSFORM HER PLANTS INTO PHOTOSYNTHETIC SAFECRACKERS!

RISE, MY PRETTY PERENNIALS FOR WHILE I HOLD THIS CHLOROBLASTER, YOU MUST OBEY MY COMMANDS!



RISE AND BREAK DOWN THE BRICK BARRIER THAT STANDS BETWEEN ME AND THE RICHES BEYOND!



FOR THIS I WOKE UP? HOLD ON, MARI-- WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!

ARCTURUS, WE CAN'T JUST RUN AWAY!

WHY NOT?!





IT SUDDENLY OCCURS TO THE FRIGHTENED FAWN THAT SAM SMITHERS DOES NOT LOVE HER-- AND PERHAPS HE NEVER DID!



AS THE PLANT STORE'S PROPRIETRESS RECOVERS FROM THE SHOCK OF SEEING AN HQ-SCALE SUPER-HERO-- PLANT-MAN RECOVERS HIS CHLORO-BLASTER!



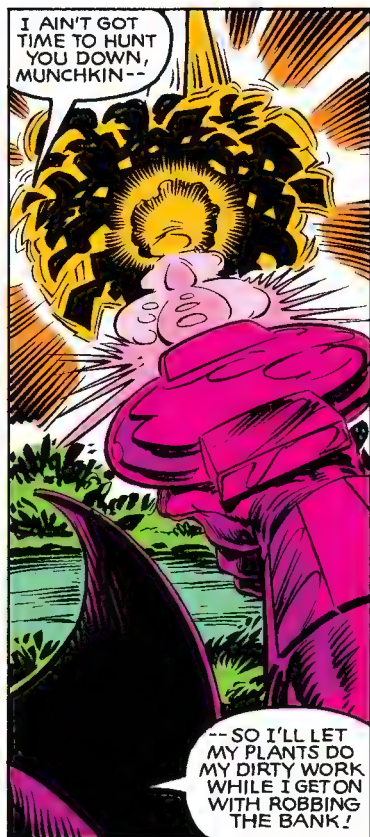
OKAY, LITTLE LADY-- SCORE ONE FOR YOU! BUT I'M BACK IN THE GAME NOW--



--AND I PLAY FOR KEEPS!

HE MISSED ME--

--BUT NOT BY MUCH, AND I CAN'T DODGE HIM FOREVER!



I AIN'T GOT TIME TO HUNT YOU DOWN, MUNCHKIN--

--SO I'LL LET MY PLANTS DO MY DIRTY WORK WHILE I GET ON WITH ROBBING THE BANK!

NO SOONER DOES PLANT-MAN TRAIN HIS CHLORO-BLASTER ON THE POTTED PLANTS THAN THEY TRANSFORM INTO THINGS OF TERROR-- SHOOTING DEADLY SPINES AT ANYTHING THAT MOVES!



THE AIR FILLING WITH DEADLY SPINES! TO KEEP THEM FROM MARI, I'LL HAVE TO FLY AS I'VE NEVER FLOWN BEFORE!

KEEP DOWN, MARI-- I'LL DRAW THESE SPINES AFTER ME WHILE YOU GO AFTER PLANT-MAN!

AND WHILE PLANTMAN IS OTHERWISE ENGAGED--

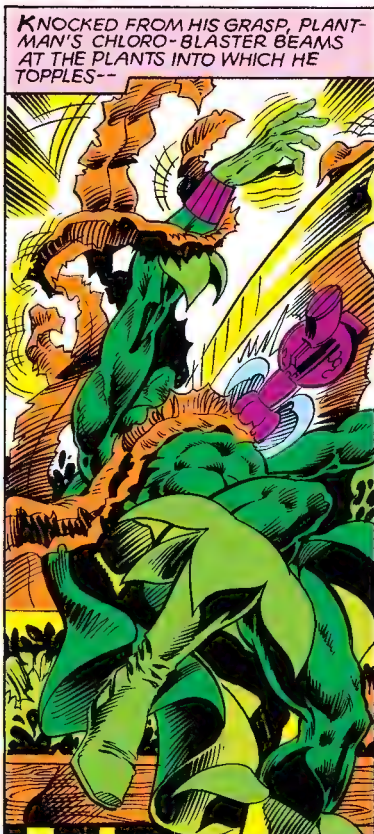
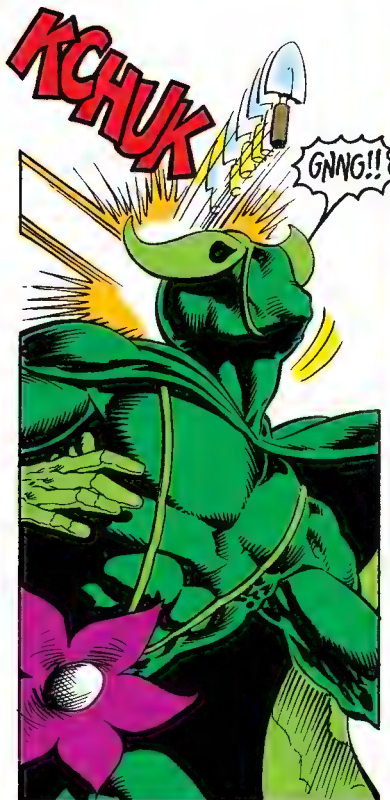
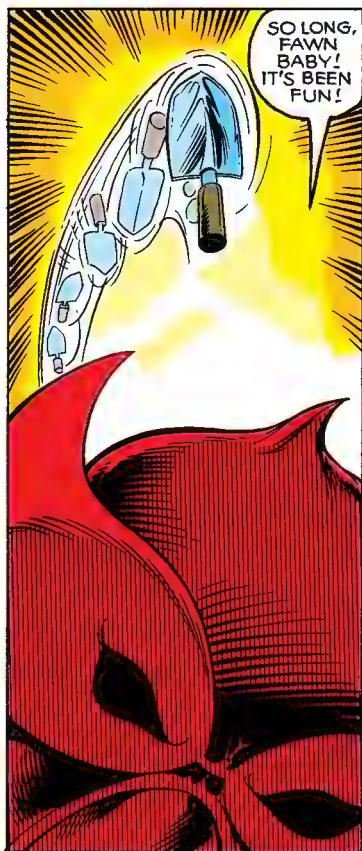
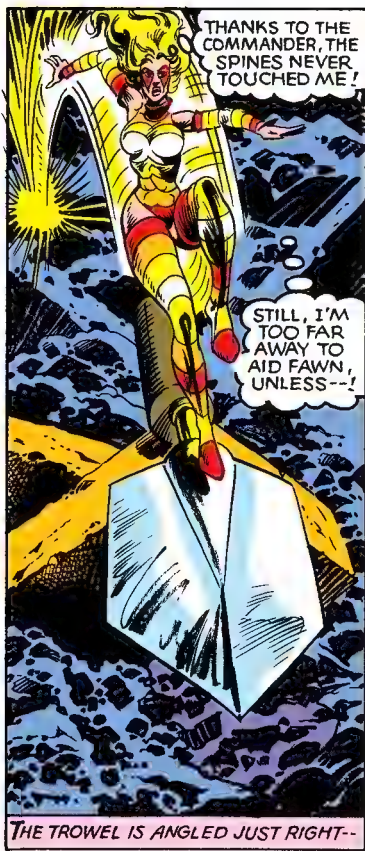


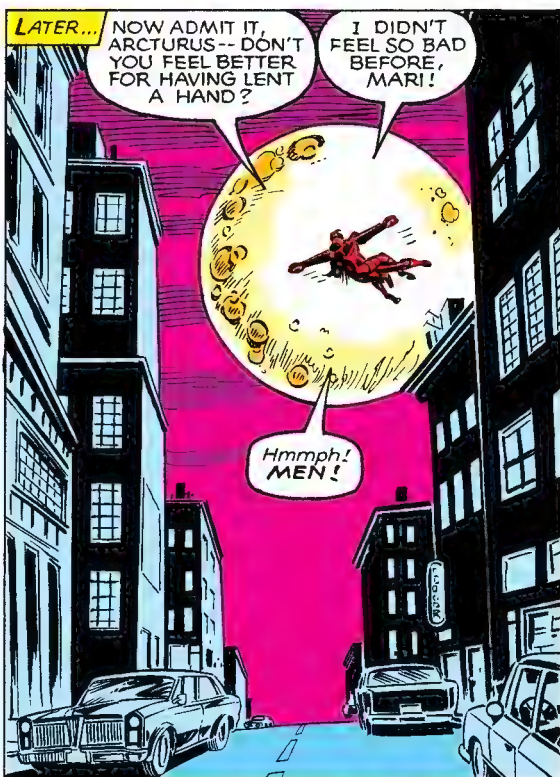
POUGHKEEPSIE POLICE? THIS IS FAWN'S FLORA! PLEASE SEND HELP BEFORE IT'S TOO...

LATE, FAWN? IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE! MY SPINE-SPORES HAVE DEALT WITH YOUR MINI-DEFENDERS--

--AND NOW I'M GOING TO DEAL WITH YOU!

I'M NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS, AM I?





NEXT ISH: YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY!
BEST DARN BURGLAR!

THE MICROVERSE, A SUBATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM, IS SEPARATED FROM OUR REALITY BY A BARRIER CALLED THE SPACEWALL! THERE MOLECULAR WORLDS WHIRL IN MAD PROFUSION! THERE A RIOTOUS RANGE OF RACES LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES! WATCHING OVER ALL STANDS A STRANGE GUARDIAN-- **TIME TRAVELER**-- A DWELLER IN DREAMS, EMISSARY OF THE ENIGMA FORCE WHO, IT IS SAID, APPEARS IN TIMES OF GATHERING DARKNESS TO LEAD MEN BACK TO THE LIGHT!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

I AM **TIME TRAVELER**--
YOUR GUIDE
AND YOUR
GUARDIAN!

WHILE THE **MICRONAUTS** ENCOUNTER ADVENTURE UPON YOUR EARTH, EVENTS ARE TAKING PLACE ON THE MOLECULAR WORLD SPARTAK THAT MAY WELL GIVE RISE TO AN AWESOME, ALL-ENGULFING EVIL!

SPARTAK IS A COLD FORBIDDING STONE-WORLD... HOME OF A MIGHTY RACE OF WARRIORS-- **THE ACROYEARS!**

MERE MOMENTS AGO, ON ITS SURFACE, A FRANTIC PLEA FOR HELP WAS SOUNDED BY THE BELEAGUED GUARDS OF THE IMPERIAL CITY'S SACRED TEMPLE OF THE ROCK-- CENTER OF THE ACROYEAR FAITH!

MAKE HASTE! THE GUARDS LIE **SLAIN** AND THE DOOR TO THE SACRED TEMPLE STANDS AJAR!

THE DEFILERS MUST STILL BE WITHIN!

NOW AN ACROYEAR AIR PATROL ARRIVES, CENTURIONS FROM THE ROYAL STONE PALACE OF SPARTAK!

COLORS BY BOB SHAREN

ENERGY-SWORDS
SIZZLING, THE
AIR-PATROL
ENTERS THE
SANCTUARY!

HOLD,
INTRUDERS! KNOW
YE THE PENALTY
FOR VIOLATING THE
TEMPLE OF THE
ROCK IS IMMEDIATE
EXECUTION--

-- TO BE CARRIED OUT
BY ME-- VESPIAN--
CAPTAIN OF THE
ROYAL GUARD OF
OUR ABSENT KING
ACROYEAR!

SOUL OF
SPARTAK!
WHAT MANNER
OF DEVILS BE
THESE ?!?

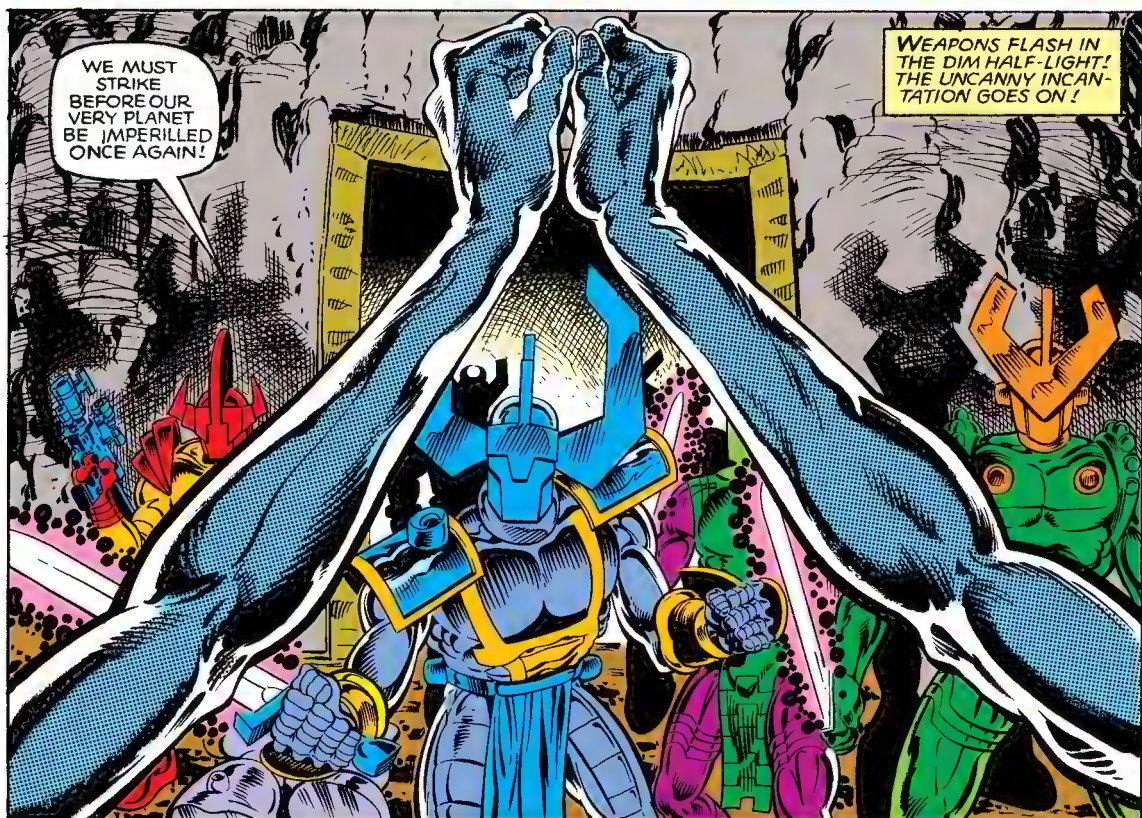
THEY STAND
WITH LINKED
HANDS BEFORE
A WRITHING
COLUMN
OF FIRE!

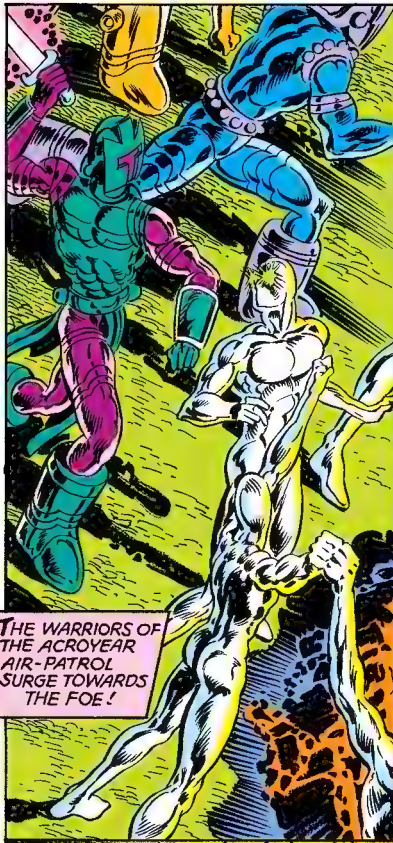
THEY
MURMUR AN
AHARMONIC
INCANTATION
THROUGH
MOUTHLESS
FACES!

THEIR
SKIN IS THE
CORPSE-
WHITE OF
DECAYING
FLESH!

STRIKE,
GUARD-CAPTAIN!
STOP THEM--
ERE IT BE TOO
LATE!

FLINGING HIS HELM ASIDE TO REVEAL HIS EBON FEATURES, THE GUARD CAPTAIN ADDRESSES THE BLOODSTAINED ELDER ...





THE WARRIORS OF THE ACROYEAR AIR-PATROL SURGE TOWARDS THE FOE!

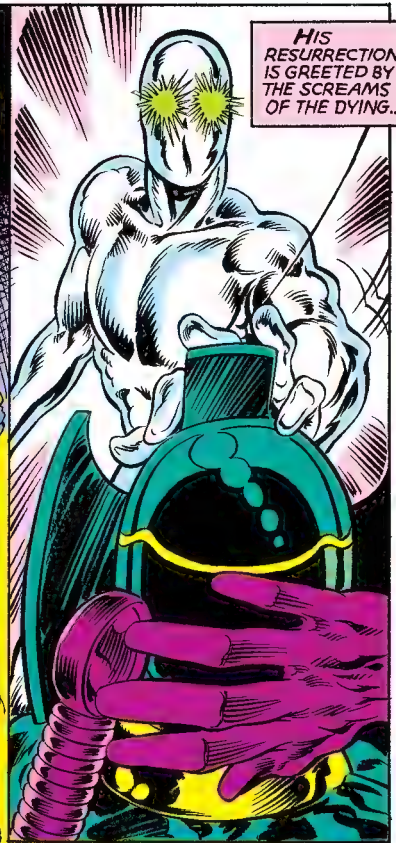


TO THEIR AMAZEMENT, THEY ARE HALTED IN MID-STRIDE AS FINGERS AS COLD AS ICE STAB OUT--

-- DROPPING THEM LITERALLY DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS.



MEANWHILE, AN ARMORED ALBINO ACROYEAR RISES FROM A CRYPT HIDDEN WITHIN THE CRATER FROM WHICH THE RAGING FIRES LEAP!

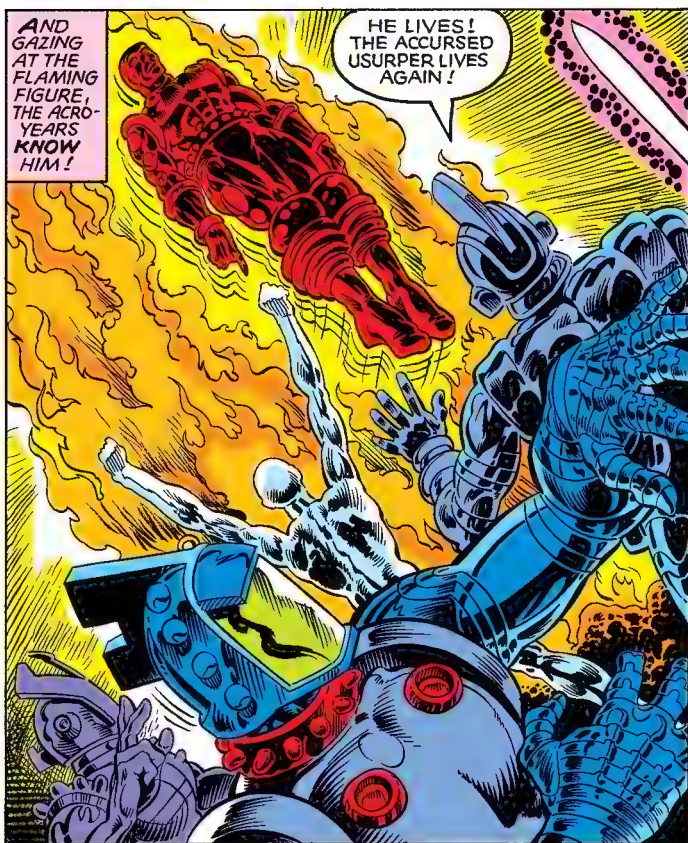


HIS RESURRECTION IS GREETED BY THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING...



...A FITTING WELCOME FOR ONE WHO IS DEAD HIMSELF...

...ONE WHOSE EYES NO LONGER MIRROR A LIVING SOUL!



AND GAZING AT THE FLAMING FIGURE, THE ACROYEARS KNOW HIM!

HE LIVES! THE ACCURSED USURPER LIVES AGAIN!



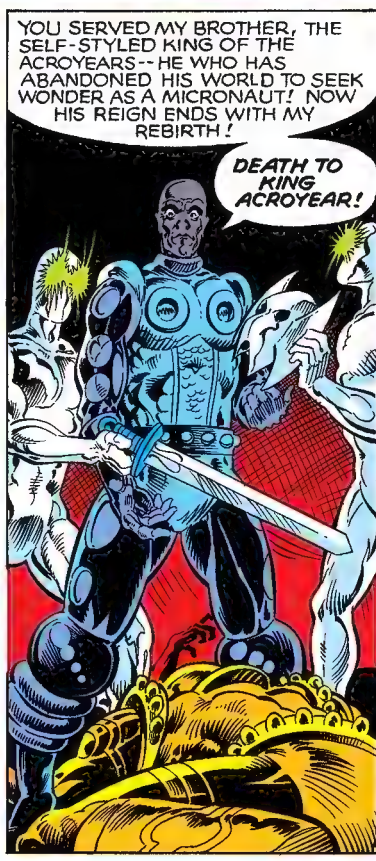
CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD--WHAT SHALL WE DO--WE WILL OBEY!

THERE IS DARK SORCERY AGAINST WHICH OUR WEAPONS ARE USELESS!

STILL WE AS MUST DIE AS WE HAVE LIVED--ACROYEARS!



DIE THEN YOU SHALL, FOLLOWERS OF FOLLY!



YOU SERVED MY BROTHER, THE SELF-STYLED KING OF THE ACROYEARS--HE WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS WORLD TO SEEK WONDER AS A MICRONAUT! NOW HIS REIGN ENDS WITH MY REBIRTH!

DEATH TO KING ACROYEAR!



LONG LIVE PRINCE SHAITAN... AGAIN!

KING ACROYEAR MUST BE FOUND--WARNED--

--THAT HIS SLAIN BROTHER STALKS THE MICROVERSE ONCE MORE!

NEXT ISSUE:
HOMEWORLD!

MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP

50¢



22
OCT

02714

WIN A **TOYS "R" US**
SHOPPING SPREE!

GRAND PRIZE MINIMUM VALUE \$3000! DETAILS INSIDE!

THE MICRONAUTS

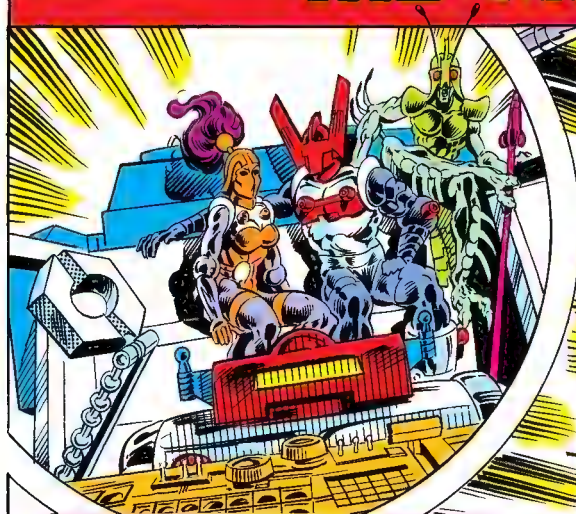
APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



Space Glider, Marionette, Acroyear, Bug, Microtron, Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!



AND MICROTRON, BUG, ACROYEAR AND HIS MATE CILICIA ARE BEING TAILGATED INTO TROUBLE SOMEWHERE ON THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY!

MICROTRON, YOU MISBEGOTTEN **METAL MUNCHKIN**-- CAN'T YOU $\geq tik \leq$ GET SOME MORE SPEED OUT OF THIS FLYING $\geq tik \leq$ FLATCAR?!

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WAY I FLY THE **ASTROSTATION**, MASTER BUG, THEN YOU TAKE THE HELM! ON SECOND THOUGHT, I RETRACT THAT-- WE WANT TO REJOIN THE REST OF THE MICRONAUTS **ALIVE!**

STILL SEPARATED AFTER THEIR BATTLE WITH ODD JOHN'S MUTATED INSECTS, THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS, ADVENTURERS FROM THE SUB-ATOMIC MICROVERSE, SEARCH FOR EACH OTHER IN VAIN... LOST AMIDST THE MAYHEM-- NATURAL AND MANMADE-- OF THIS GIANT PLANET EARTH!

COMMANDER RANN AND MARIONETTE HAVE ALREADY ENCOUNTERED EVIL IN THE GUISE OF THE SUPER-POWERFUL PLANT-MAN! THE EVER-FAITHFUL ROBOID BIOTRON LABORS ON TO REPAIR THE CRIPPLED MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR!

COMMANDER RANN

MARIONETTE

MICROTRON

BIOTRON

ACROYEAR

CILICIA

BUG

THE BEST DARNED BURGLAR IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD!

BILL MANTLO | PAT BRODERICK | ARMANDO GIL | TOM ORZECOWSKI, letterer | LOUISE JONES | JIM SHOOTER
MICROWRITER | MICROARTIST | MICROINKER | BOB SHAREN, colorist | MICROEDITOR | MACROEDITOR

Hrrmph! YA SEE HOW THINGS GET $\geq$ fik $\leq$ OUT OF HAND WHEN YA MAKE MACHINES EQUAL TA HUMANS, ACROYER?!

NOT LONG AGO MANY IN THE MICROVERSE MADE THE SAME COMPLAINT ABOUT GRANTING EQUALITY TO *INSECTIVORIDS*, BUG.

BESIDES, ALL ROBOIDS FROM HOMEWORLD ARE A SYNTHESIS OF MAN AND MACHINE. MICROTRON IS AS "ALIVE" AS ANY OF US.

THANK YOU, LADY CILICIA. WHILE I WAS DESIGNED AS A PERSONAL ROBOID-- JESTER, TUTOR, SERVANT AND GUARDIAN TO THE PRINCESS MARIO-NETTE-- I STILL HOPE I HAVE PROVEN MY WORTH AS A MICRONAUT!

AH, I WAS ONLY $\geq$ like KIDDIN', RUST-BUCKET! YER ONE OF US--PART OF THE TEAM--IF WE $\geq$ like $\leq$ STILL ARE A TEAM!

WE AIN'T SEEN HIDE NOR $\geq$ tik $\leq$ HAIR OF COMMANDER RANN AN' MARIONETTE SINCE THE BIG BUST-UP AT THAT EARTH FOOD OUTLET-- AND WE AIN'T HEARD A PEEP FROM BIO-TRON ON OUR $\geq$ fik $\leq$ COMMUNICATORS!

UGLY AS THE POSSIBILITY MAY BE-- WE COULD $\geq$ fik $\leq$ BE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE MICRONAUTS!

AT THAT MOMENT, BEHIND THE HOVERING ASTROSTATION, BARRELING DOWN THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AND BEARING DOWN ON OUR HEROES AT 55 MILES PER HOUR...

HEY, REILLY! REILLY-- WAKE UP! I THINK MAYBE YOU'D BETTER TAKE OVER THE WHEEL!

Huh? WHADDA YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? I DROVE ALL NIGHT! YOU ONLY BEEN AT THE WHEEL A FEW HOURS!

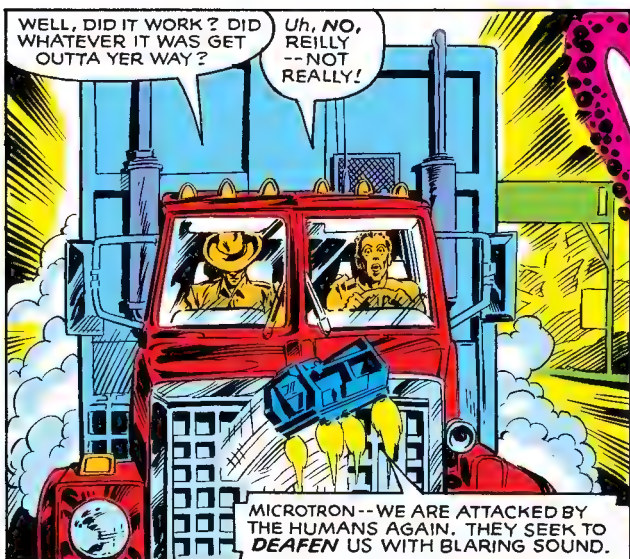
I KNOW THAT, REILLY-- BUT, WELL, THERE'S SOMETHIN' ON THE ROAD AHEAD OF US!

Ah, BLOW THE HORN AN' IT'LL GET OUTTA YER WAY!

BLINKING HIS EYES AND FINDING THE FLOATING APPARITION STILL BEFORE HIS BUMPER, THE DRIVER HEEDS HIS PARTNER'S ADVICE...

BWAAAAA

HOLY SHREW! WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE $\geq$ fik $\leq$ GREAT EGG WAS THAT???



WELL, DID IT WORK? DID
WHATEVER IT WAS GET
OUTTA YER WAY?

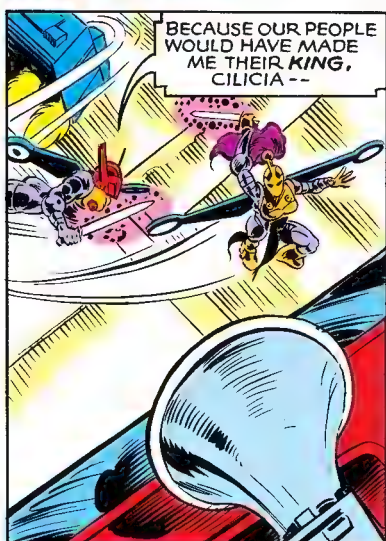
Uh, NO,
REILLY
--NOT
REALLY!

MICROTRON--WE ARE ATTACKED BY
THE HUMANS AGAIN. THEY SEEK TO
DEAFEN US WITH BLARING SOUND.

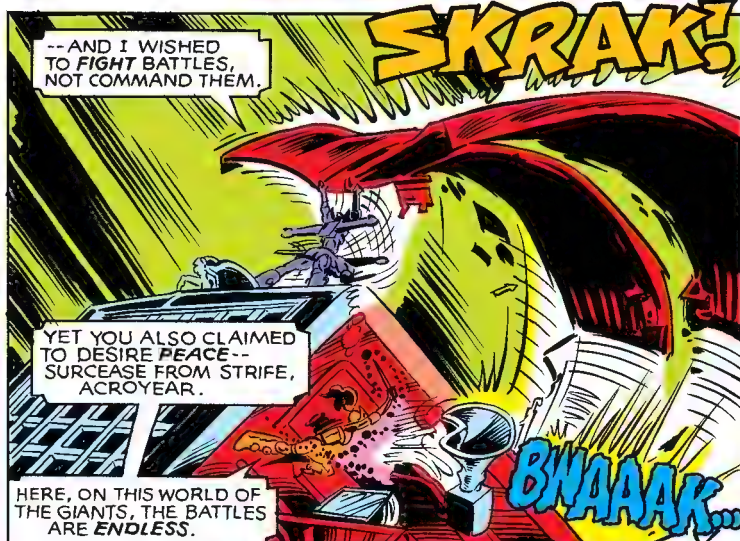


IT IS EVER THUS ON THIS INSANE WORLD,
WITH THE SOLE EXCEPTION OF THE
YOUTH, STEVE COFFIN, WHO BEFRIENDED
US WHEN WE FIRST ARRIVED ON EARTH,
ALL OTHER HUMANS HAVE SOUGHT
TO SUBDUDE OR SLAY US.

THEN WHY HAVE WE LEFT
THE MICROVERSE AND
SPARTAK, OUR HOME
PLANET, MY LOVE?



BECAUSE OUR PEOPLE
WOULD HAVE MADE
ME THEIR KING,
CILICIA--



--AND I WISHED
TO FIGHT BATTLES,
NOT COMMAND THEM.

YET YOU ALSO CLAIMED
TO DESIRE PEACE--
SURCEASE FROM STRIFE,
ACROYEAR.

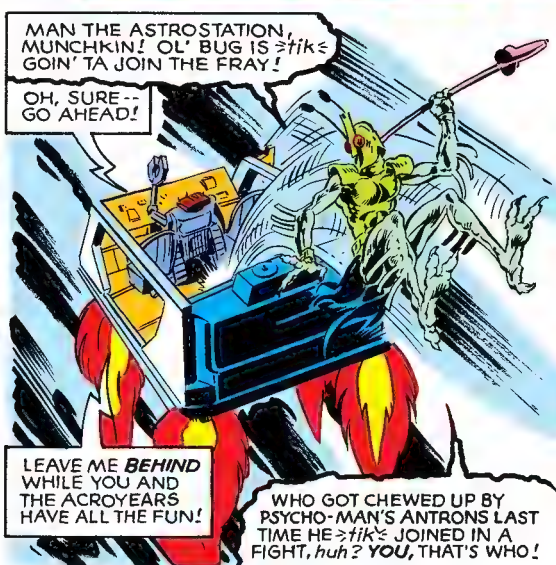
HERE, ON THIS WORLD OF
THE GIANTS, THE BATTLES
ARE ENDLESS.



"BWAAK"? WHAT THE
HECK KIND O' SOUND IS
THAT FOR OUR HORN
TA MAKE--?

WE AIN'T GOT NO
HORN NO MORE, REILLY!

THAT'S WHAT I BEEN TRYIN'
TA TELL YA ALL ALONG! WE'RE
UNDER ATTACK, BUDDY--BY A MESS
O' SIX-INCH STORM-TROOPERS
STRAIGHT OUTTA "STAR WARS"!

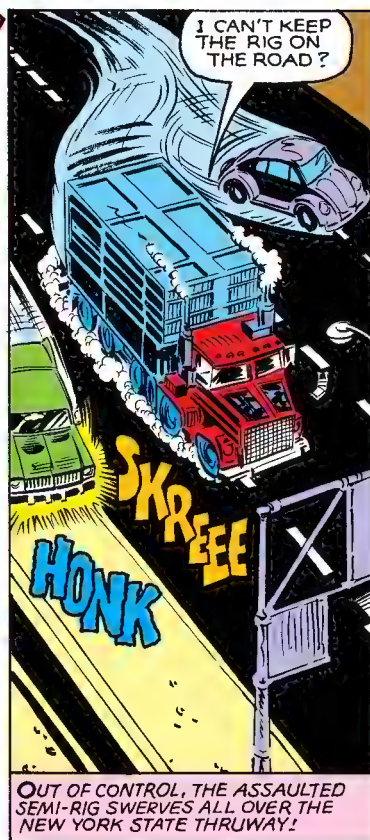
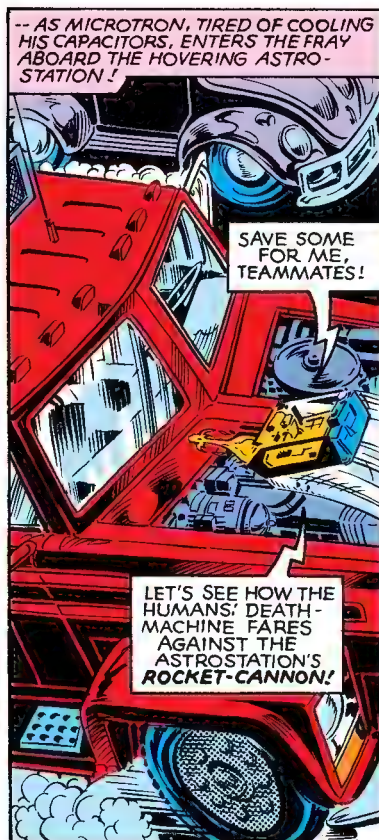


MAN THE ASTROSTATION,
MUNCHKIN! OL' BUG IS $\approx tik \approx$
GOIN' TA JOIN THE FRAY!

OH, SURE--
GO AHEAD!

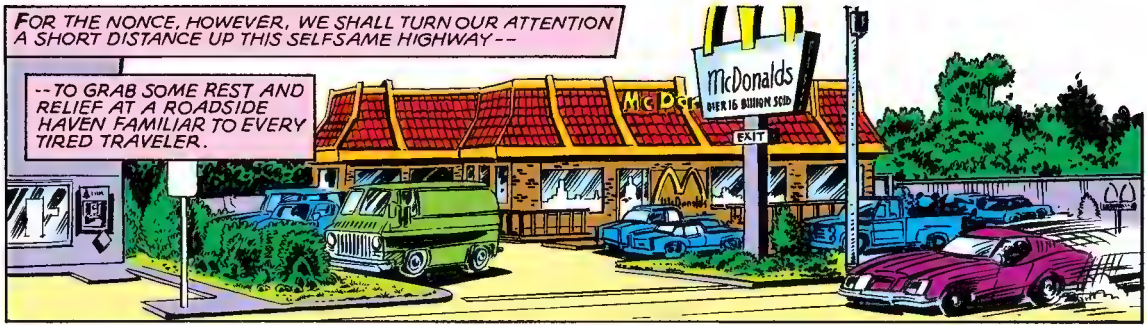
LEAVE ME BEHIND
WHILE YOU AND
THE ACROYEARS
HAVE ALL THE FUN!

WHO GOT CHEWED UP BY
PSYCHO-MAN'S ANTRONS LAST
TIME HE $\approx tik \approx$ JOINED IN A
FIGHT, huh? YOU, THAT'S WHO!



FOR THE NONCE, HOWEVER, WE SHALL TURN OUR ATTENTION A SHORT DISTANCE UP THIS SELFSAME HIGHWAY--

-- TO GRAB SOME REST AND RELIEF AT A ROADSIDE HAVEN FAMILIAR TO EVERY TIRED TRAVELER.



97 COKE .39 .59 FRIES LG. .69 QUARTER-LB. 1.89 CHERRY PIE .89



AFTER WORK?

HI THERE! WHAT'LL IT BE?

Oh, COUPLE A' QUARTER POUNDERS, FRIES, AN' TWO COKES.

I ALREADY TOLD YOU, FREDDY--NO!

DADDY, I GOTTA USE THE BAT'ROOM!

BEHIND THE PLEASANT FASCAD-- THERE ARE SINISTER FORCES AT WORK!



RODNEY, JUST WHAT IN BLAZES DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

I'M ROBBERING YOUR ESTABLISHMENT, MR. MICHAELS--AND DON'T CALL ME RODNEY!

BUT THAT'S YOUR NAME! YOU USED TO WORK FOR ME HERE!

THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST, POPS! THIS MASK MAKES ME A **BURGLAR**! I'M TIRED OF SLINGING HASH FOR A LIVING! I WANT TO MAKE A FRESH START--

-- STARTING WITH ALL THE DOUGH IN YOUR SAFE AND IN THOSE RINGING CASH REGISTERS!



HI, RODNEY!

HI, DARLEEN. Uh, CALL ME **BURGLAR**, HUH?

SURE-- WHATEVER YOU WANT!

AT THAT MOMENT, TERROR GRIPS THE PATRONS OF THE HAMBURGER EMPORIUM LIKE A CASE OF STOMACH CRAMPS!



EEEEEE!

HEY! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SCREAM TILL I SAY "STICK 'EM UP"!

RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! IT'S COMING RIGHT AT US!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE ONLY DANGER HERE IS FROM MY **PISTOL**! DON'T MAKE ME--



-- HOLY SHOOT!!

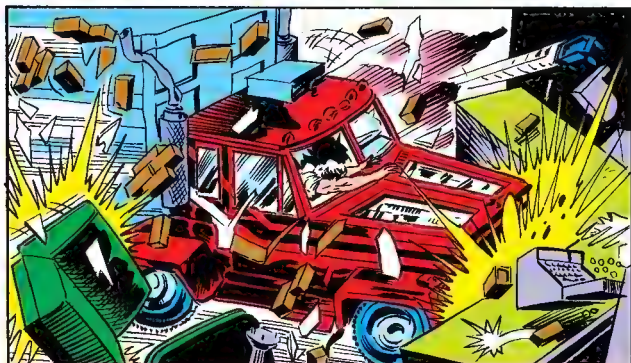
IT-IT'S A MACK **TRUCK** BARRELING OFF THE THRU-WAY -- BEARING DOWN ON THE DINER LIKE A HALF-BACK AT A GIANTS GAME! GET OUTTA HERE, MR. MICHAELS--**RUN!**

RODNEY'S SUDDEN SEIZURE OF ALTRUISM IS MOST COMMENDABLE--

--HOWEVER, IT LEAVES THE SELF-STYLED BURGLAR RIGHT OUT IN FRONT AS THE DIESEL-POWERED JUGGERNAUT PUNCHES A HOLE IN THE DINER'S PLATE-GLASS WINDOWS!

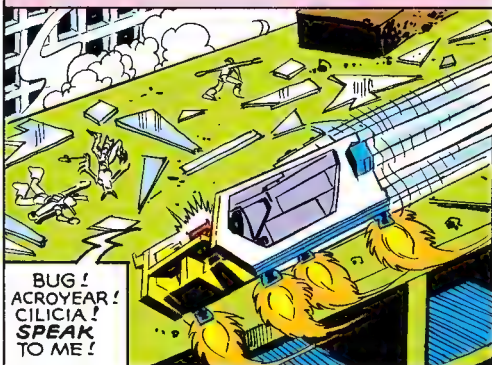
SKRASH!

ANYBODY **ELSE** WANT TO TELL ME TO STAY OUT OF THE ROUGH-HOUSE STUFF?



MERCIFULLY, ALL THE **OTHER** OCCUPANTS OF THE DINER FLED IN TIME, SO THE OUT-OF-CONTROL TRUCK DEALS ONLY DESTRUCTION... AND NOT DEATH!

STILL, AS THE SKIDDING SEMI COMES TO A FENDER-BENDING HALT, THREE OF THE MICRONAUTS LIE SHAKEN AND STUNNED!

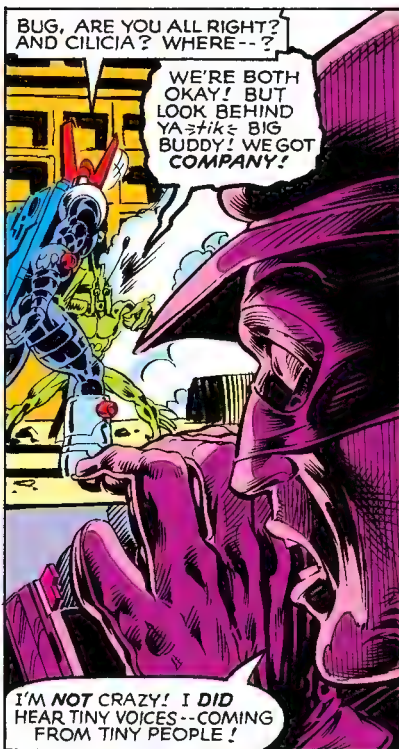


BUG!
ACROYEAR!
CILICIA!
SPEAK
TO ME!



HOLY MOOSE--
I'M ALIVE! OR
AM I? I SEEM TO
BE SHOWERED
WITH MONEY!
THAT'S NOT
REALITY!

AND I KEEP
HEARING
TINY VOICES!



BUG, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
AND CILICIA? WHERE--?

WE'RE BOTH
OKAY! BUT
LOOK BEHIND
YA ^{stik} BIG
BUDDY! WE GOT
COMPANY!

I'M NOT CRAZY! I DID
HEAR TINY VOICES-- COMING
FROM TINY PEOPLE!



IT-- IT MUST BE THE **SHOCK**--
THAT TRUCK PILING INTO THE
PLACE, SMASHING ME BACK
OVER THE COUNTER! THEY'RE
POLTERGEISTS-- GREMLINS!

IF I SHOOT AT THEM, THEY'LL
VANISH-- AND I'LL SNAP
OUT OF IT!

AN INTERESTING THEORY--

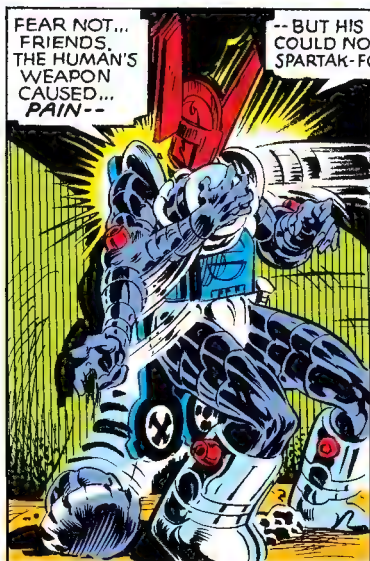


--BUT, UN-
FORTUNATELY,
ONE NOT
BORNE OUT
IN PRACTICE!

UNNGHH!

ACROYEAR!

HOLY
SHREW!



FEAR NOT...
FRIENDS.
THE HUMAN'S
WEAPON
CAUSED...
PAIN--

-- BUT HIS PROJECTILE
COULD NOT... **PIERCE** MY
SPARTAK-FORGED ARMOR.



M-MAYBE
I **AM**
DEAD?!



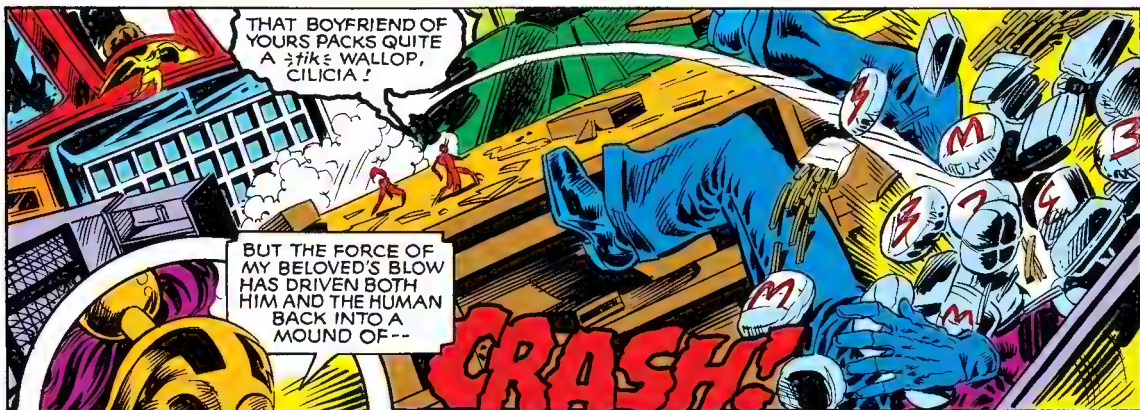
IF YOU ARE NOT NOW, HUMAN,
THEN -- FOR DARING TO STRIKE
AT A PRINCE OF THE
WARRIOR ACROYEARS--

-- YOU SOON
WILL BE!



YEEAGGH! YOU--
YOU'RE NOT **HUMAN**!
PRAISE THE
WORLD**MIND**!

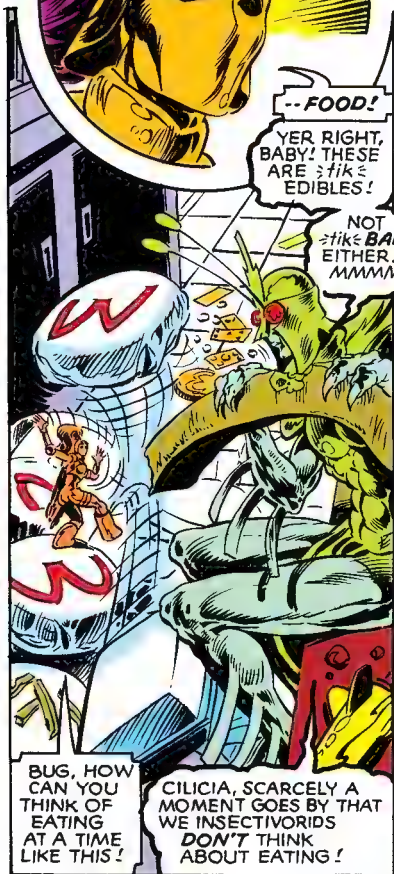
RETH



THAT BOYFRIEND OF
YOURS PACKS QUITE
A **stik** WALLOP,
CILICIA!

BUT THE FORCE OF
MY BELOVED'S BLOW
HAS DRIVEN BOTH
HIM AND THE HUMAN
BACK INTO A
MOUND OF--

CRASH!



--**FOOD!**

YER RIGHT,
BABY! THESE
ARE **stik**
EDIBLES!

NOT
stik **BAD**,
EITHER!
MMMM!

BUG, HOW
CAN YOU
THINK OF
EATING
AT A TIME
LIKE THIS!

CILICIA, SCARCELY A
MOMENT GOES BY THAT
WE INSECTIVORIDS
DON'T THINK
ABOUT EATING!



**GET
OFF
ME!**

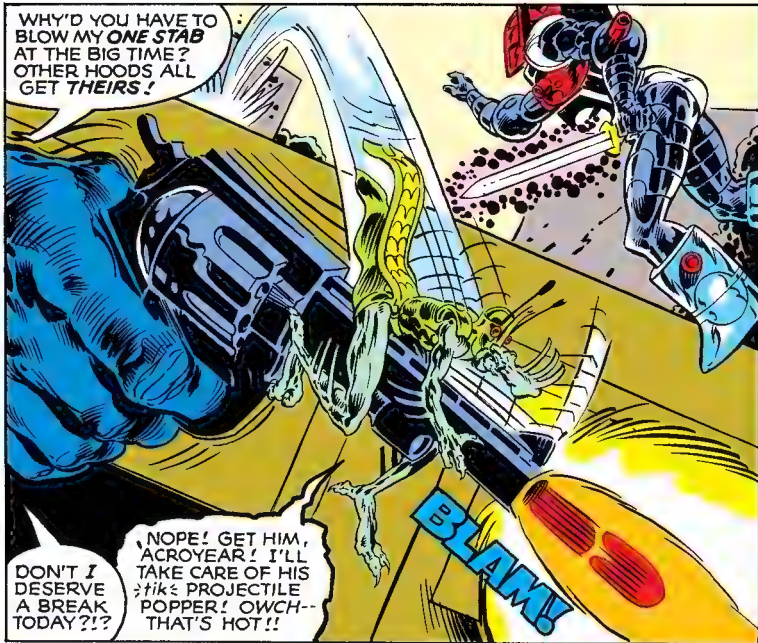
WAP

Unnnhh!



Uh-oh! LOOKS
LIKE IT'S **stik**
PARTY-TIME
AGAIN!

YOU'VE **RUINED**
ME! YOU MADE
THE TRUCK CRASH
JUST AS I WAS
ROBBING THE PLACE!
WHY DID YOU HAVE
TO BUTT IN?



WHY'D YOU HAVE TO BLOW MY **ONE STAB** AT THE BIG TIME? OTHER HOODS ALL GET **THEIRS**!

DON'T I DESERVE A BREAK TODAY?!!

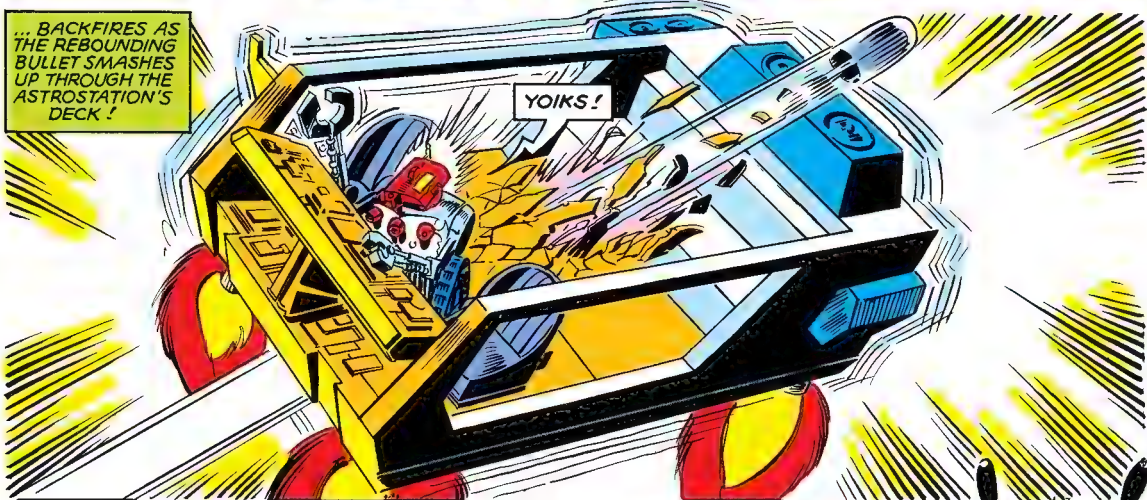
NOPE! GET HIM, ACROYEAR! I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIS *stik*s PROJECTILE POPPER! OWCH-- THAT'S HOT!!

BLAM!



BUG'S UNTHINKING ACT OF HEROISM-- LIKE MOST OF THE ANXIOUS INSECTIVORID'S UNDERTAKINGS -- WHILE WELL-MEANT...

SPLASHOW!



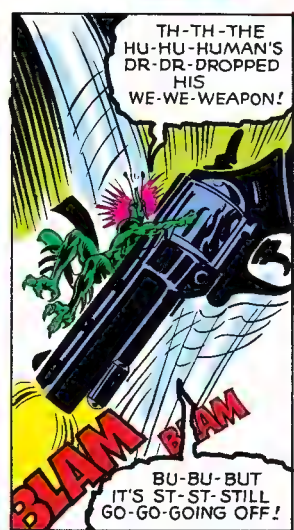
... BACKFIRES AS THE REBOUNDING BULLET SMASHES UP THROUGH THE ASTROSTATION'S DECK!

YOIKS!



MURDERER! YOUR WEAPON COULD HAVE KILLED MICROTRON!

MURDER--! HEY, WAIT! I'M JUST INTO **GRAND LARCENY**, NOT HOMICIDE! YAAGH! MY NECK!



TH-TH-THE HU-HU-HUMAN'S DR-DR-DROPPED HIS WE-WE-WEAPON!

BLAM!
BU-BU-BUT IT'S ST-ST-STILL GO-GO-GOING OFF!

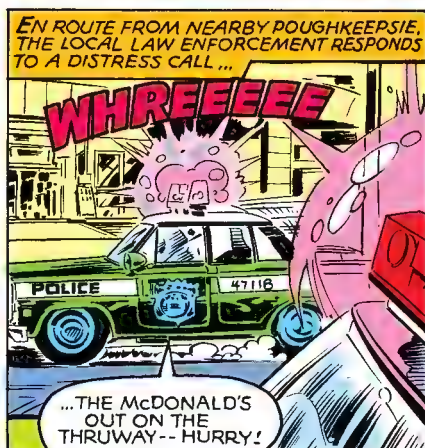
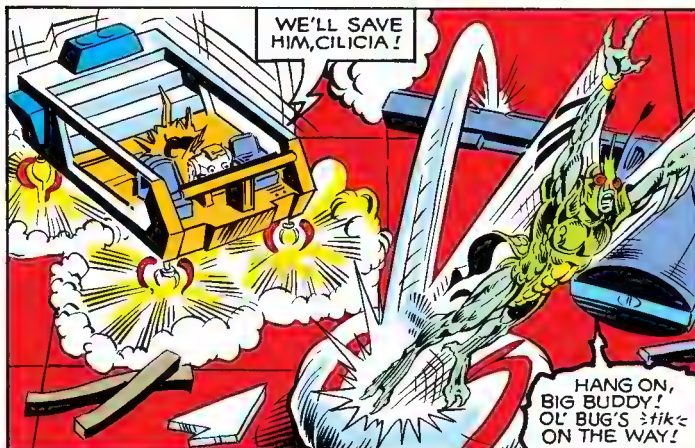
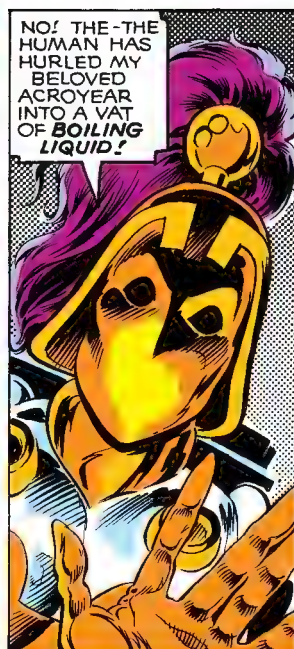


BO-BO-BOUNCING ALL O-O-O-OVER THE PL-PL-PLACE--

-- AND TA-TA-TAKING ME *stik*s WITH IT!



-- CAN'T A GUY EVEN MAKE A DISHONEST DOLLAR IN PEACE?!



PLEASE EXCUSE ARCTURUS'-- THAT IS, COMMANDER RANN'S-- IMPATIENCE! YOU SEE, WE NEED TO KNOW...

BLAST IT, WOMAN-- WE NEED TO KNOW WHERE THE "LITTLE PEOPLE" ARE THAT THIS WHOLE COMMUNITY IS BUZZING ABOUT!

FRIENDS OF YOURS, huh? WELL, I HEARD TELL ON THE POLICE FREQUENCY THAT THEY'RE MAKIN' QUITE A MESS OUT THATAWAY!

MARIONETTE IN HIS ARMS, COMMANDER RANN SOARS IN THE DIRECTION INDICATED!

I SUGGEST WE $\text{\textcircled{t}}\text{\textcircled{k}}$ BEAT IT OUTTA HERE! THIS FIGHT IS GETTIN' US NOWHERE!

WHERE *IS* THERE TO GET TO, BUG? WE ARE STILL LOST.

ALAS!

BUT WHAT OF OUR ADVERSARY-- HE WHO SOUGHT TO *SLAY* US?

WHAT OF THE WOULD-BE BURGLAR? AT THIS MOMENT HIS DREAMS OF GRANDEUR ARE CAVING IN LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS!

CARS PULLING UP OUTSIDE--? Oh, NO! IT'S THE COPS!

FELLOW MICRONAUTS-- I THINK WE'D BEST BE OFF!

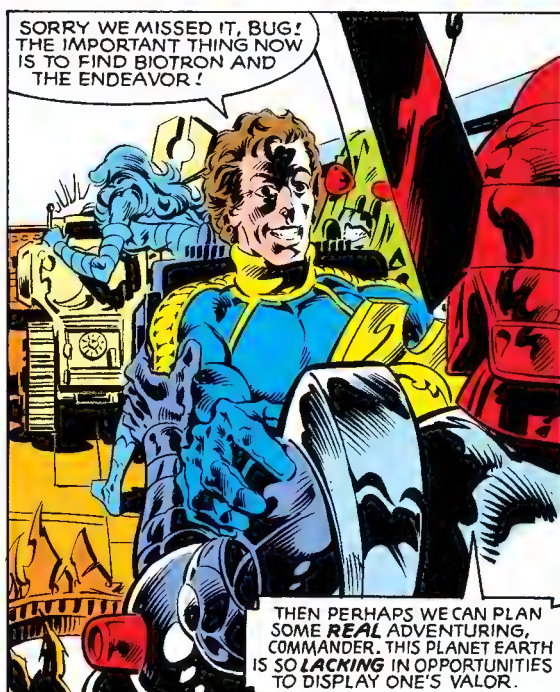
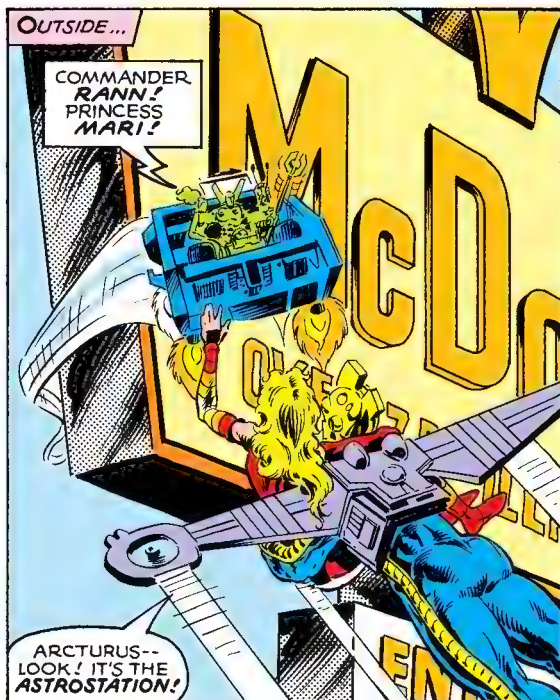
MEANWHILE, IN THE MIDST OF THE MAYHEM THAT HAD ONCE BEEN A QUIET EATERY...

ACROYEAR-- YOU LIVE?!

OF COURSE, BELOVED. WAS THERE ANY QUESTION BUT THAT I SURVIVED?

C'MON, BIG BUDDY-- QUIT JAWIN'! I CAN'T HOLD THIS BASKET UP OUTTA THE $\text{\textcircled{t}}\text{\textcircled{k}}$ FAT ALL DAY!

AS THE DAMAGED ASTROSTATION GAINS ALTITUDE, BAFFLED POLICE BURST IN!



AN OLD VILLAIN REVIVED IN A WILD NEW WAY!
DON'T MISS...

NEXT
ISSUE: **BIOTRON AT BAY!**

THE MICROVERSE-- A SUB-ATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM, SEPARATED FROM OUR REALITY BY A BARRIER CALLED THE SPACE WALL! HERE MOLECULAR WORLDS WHIRL IN MAD PROFUSION! HERE A RIOTOUS RANGE OF RACES LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES! WATCHING OVER ALL STANDS A STRANGE GUARDIAN-- **TIME TRAVELER**--A DWELLER IN DREAMS, EMISSARY OF THE ENIGMA FORCE WHO, IT IS SAID, APPEARS IN TIMES OF GATHERING DARKNESS TO LEAD MEN BACK TO THE LIGHT.

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

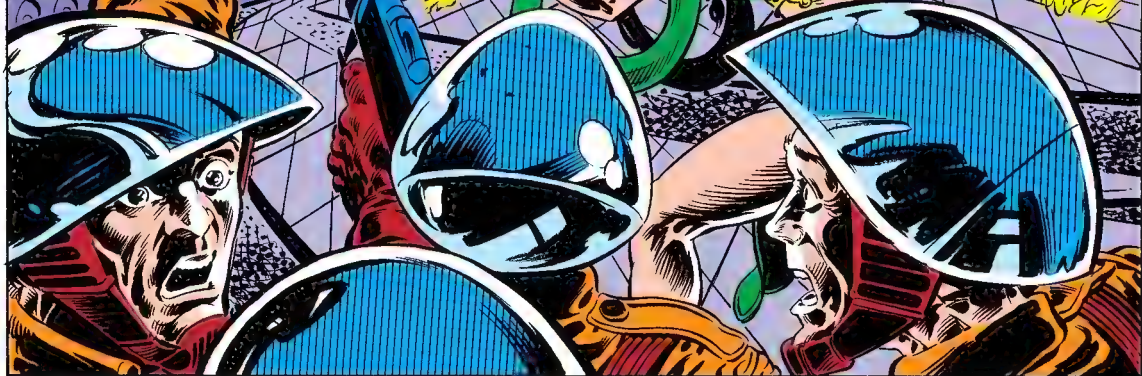
I AM TIME TRAVELER, YOUR GUIDE TO THE MYSTERIES OF THE MICROVERSE. SHORTLY AFTER THE EVIL **PRINCE SHAITAN'S** RESURRECTION ON THE ACROYEAR PLANET, SPARTAK, A FIERY RAIN FALLS ON THE ROYAL CITY OF THE PLANET, HOMEWORLD.

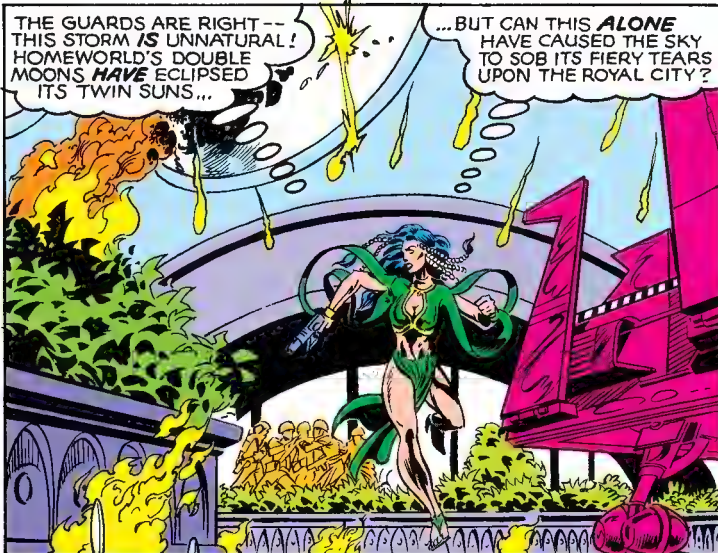
THE BEAUTIFUL EX-REBEL, COMMANDER **SLUG**-- BETROTHED OF HOMEWORLD'S **PRINCE ARGON**-- TRIES TO CALM THE PALACE GUARDS--

GUARDS, WHY ARE YOU SO FEARFUL?

THIS FRIGHTENS US, MILADY, 'TIS NO NATURAL RAIN WHICH DARKENS THE MIDDAY SKY AND SETS THE VERY STREETS AFIRE!

DO SOLDIERS OF THE REALM COWER BEFORE MERE **METEORITES**? RETURN TO YOUR POSTS! YOU SHOWED MORE COURAGE AGAINST THE DEMON-HORDES OF **BARON KARZA**!



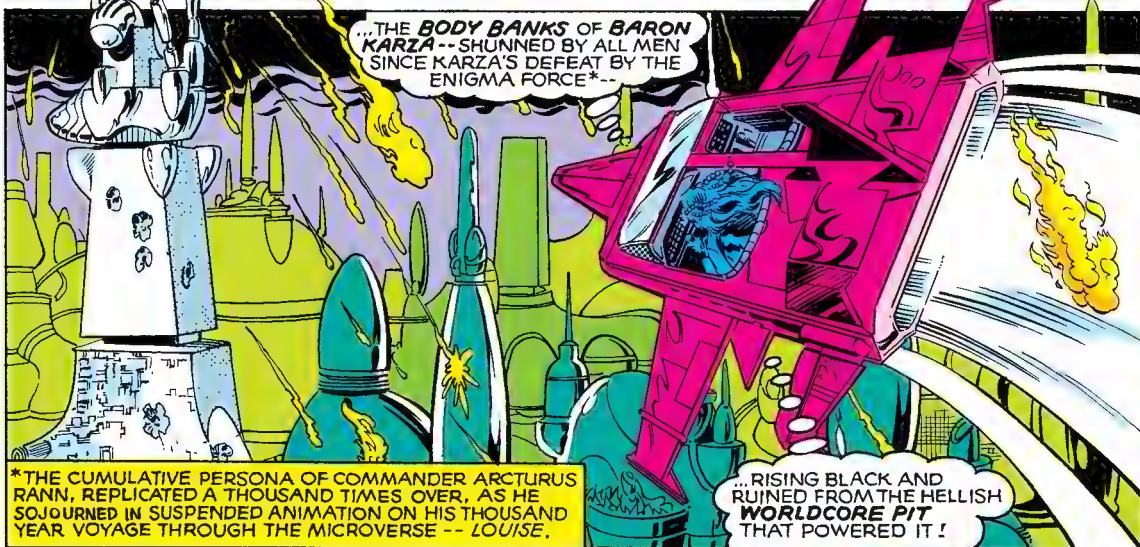


THE GUARDS ARE RIGHT -- THIS STORM *IS* UNNATURAL! HOMEWORLD'S DOUBLE MOONS *HAVE* ECLIPSED ITS TWIN SUNS...

...BUT CAN THIS *ALONE* HAVE CAUSED THE SKY TO SOB ITS FIERY TEARS UPON THE ROYAL CITY?



YET NOT ALL THE CITY IS SUBJECT TO THIS SEARING BOMBARDMENT! FROM HIGH ATOP THE PALACE, I SAW THAT ONE EDIFICE ALONE STOOD UNTOUCHED BY THE FLAMES...

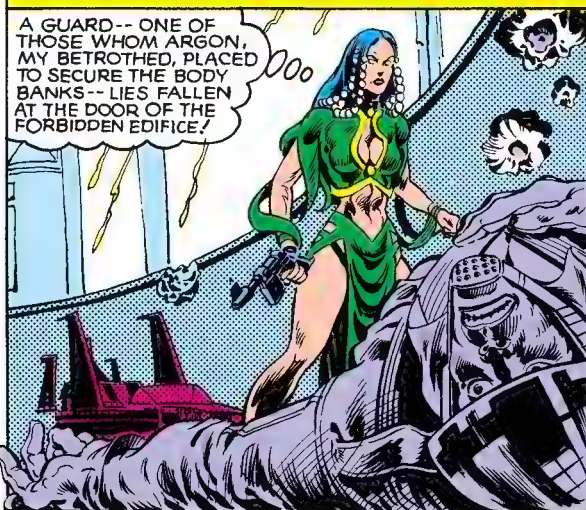


...THE *BODY BANKS* OF BARON *KARZA*--SHUNNED BY ALL MEN SINCE KARZA'S DEFEAT BY THE ENIGMA FORCE*--

*THE CUMULATIVE PERSONA OF COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN, REPLICATED A THOUSAND TIMES OVER, AS HE SOJOURNED IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION ON HIS THOUSAND YEAR VOYAGE THROUGH THE MICROVERSE -- LOUISE.

...RISING BLACK AND RUINED FROM THE HELLISH *WORLDSCORE PIT* THAT POWERED IT!

LANDING HER PERSONAL HOVERCRAFT, THE STRONG-WILLED EX-REBEL APPROACHES THE SINISTER STRUCTURE...



A GUARD-- ONE OF THOSE WHOM ARGON, MY BETROTHED, PLACED TO SECURE THE BODY BANKS-- LIES FALLEN AT THE DOOR OF THE FORBIDDEN EDIFICE!

SOMEONE HAS FORCED HIS WAY INSIDE.



ARGON LEFT THE PALACE WHEN THE FIRESTORM STARTED. I HAD HOPED HE HAD COME *HERE*... FOR ONLY HE CAN GRANT ME RIGHTFUL ACCESS TO THIS HOUSE OF EVIL!



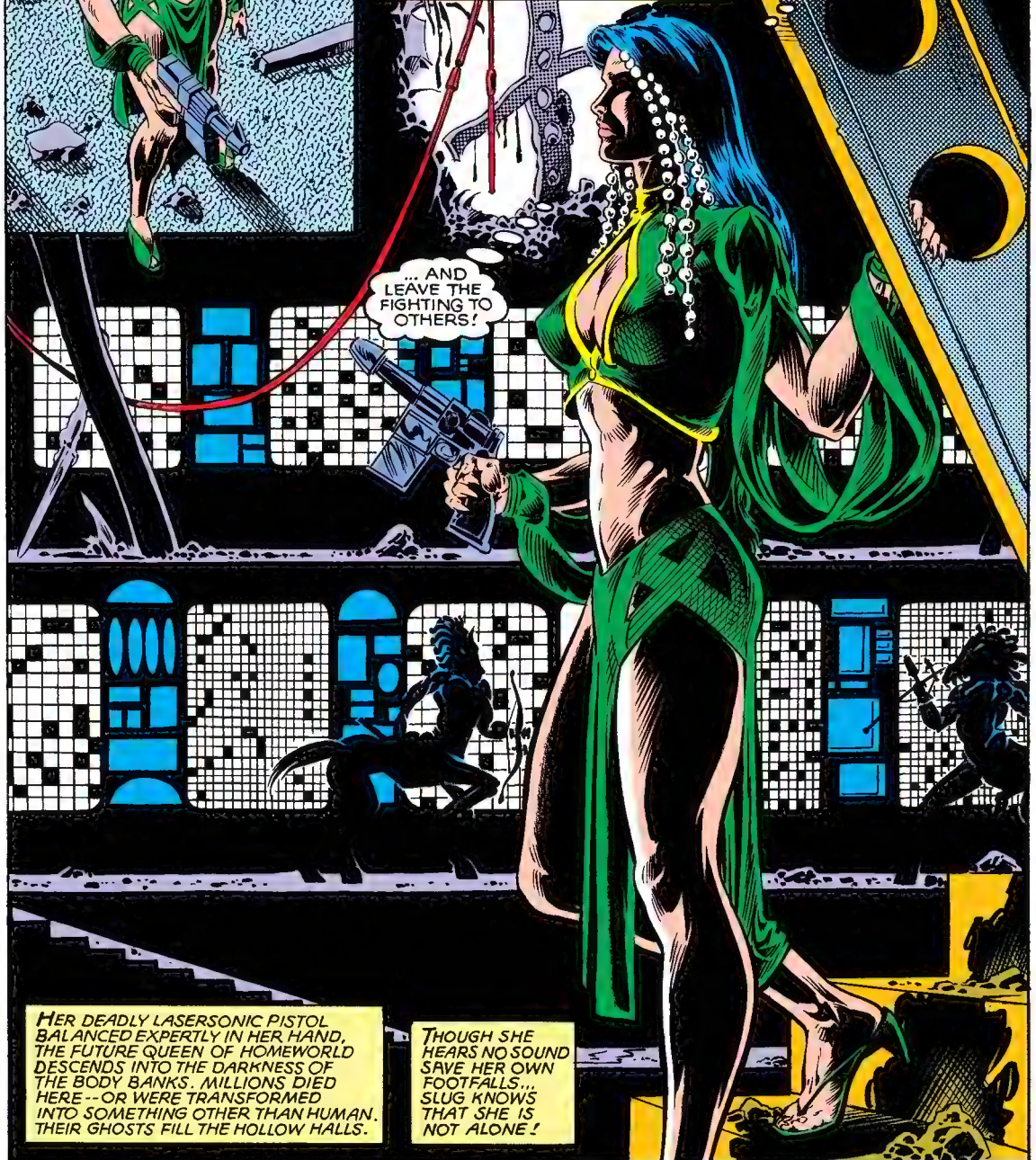
BUT ARGON IS ABSENT, I **AM** HIS BETROTHED...

... AND I **DID** ONCE RESCUE HIM FROM THIS VERY PLACE DURING THE WAR AGAINST KARZA!



SURELY NO ONE--
LEAST OF ALL MY LOVER--

-- WOULD SUGGEST THAT I, WHO FOUGHT IN THE REBELLION SINCE CHILDHOOD, WOULD NOW SHRINK FROM DANGER...



... AND LEAVE THE FIGHTING TO OTHERS!

HER DEADLY LASERSONIC PISTOL BALANCED EXPERTLY IN HER HAND, THE FUTURE QUEEN OF HOMEWORLD DESCENDS INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE BODY BANKS. MILLIONS DIED HERE--OR WERE TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING OTHER THAN HUMAN. THEIR GHOSTS FILL THE HOLLOW HALLS.

THOUGH SHE HEARS NO SOUND SAVE HER OWN FOOTFALLS... SLUG KNOWS THAT SHE IS NOT ALONE!

THEN SHE WHIRLS, WARNED BY TIME-TESTED BATTLE INSTINCTS, AS THE BATTLE BEGINS!

LASER-ARROWS!



ONLY ONE
HOMEWORLD
RACE WIELDS
SUCH WEAPONS--
THE DESERT-
DWELLING
CENTAURS!

BUT WHAT DO
THEY *HERE*-- AND
HOW DID THEY
PENETRATE THE
CITY'S DEFENSE
PERIMETER ?!

I PASSED
THEM THROUGH,
MILADY! NO
GUARD
WOULD DARE
QUESTION ME!

ARGON!



YES, SLUG, ARGON-- PRINCE OF THE REALM, HEIR
TO HOMEWORLD'S THRONE... YOUR BELOVED! YET,
WHEN THE FIRESTORM STARTED, I AWOKE TO
THE REALIZATION THAT I OWE MY ALLEGIANCE
TO ANOTHER, *GREATER* FUTURE !



YOU REMEMBER, SLUG, HOW
ARGON, THE MAN, *DIED* IN
THESE SAME BODY BANKS-- AND
HOW ARGON THE *MAN-BEAST*
WAS BORN-- A PRODUCT OF BARON
KARZA'S GENETIC MANIPULATIONS?



TODAY I LEARNED THAT, BESIDES ALTERING MY **PHYSICAL FORM**, KARZA, IN HIS WISDOM, ALSO TAMPERED WITH MY **MIND**-- IMPLANTING A POST-OPERATIVE SUGGESTION TO BE ACTIVATED AT THE PROPER **SIGNAL**...

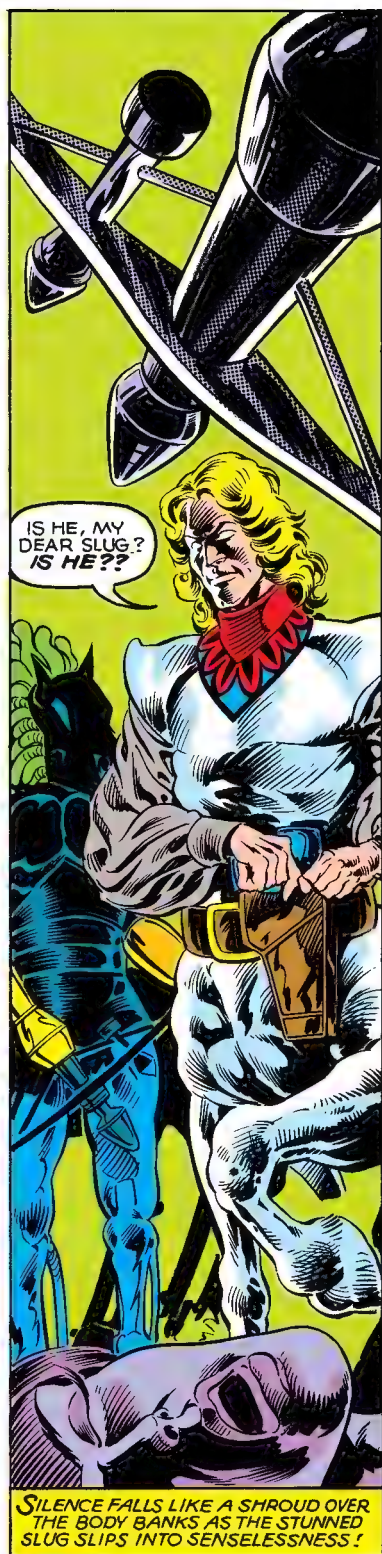
... THAT **RAIN OF FIRE** OUTSIDE! NOW, DESPITE MY KNOWLEDGE OF WHO I WAS AND WHAT WE ONCE MEANT TO EACH OTHER --

-- I MUST ACCEPT MY GLORIOUS DESTINY... AND SERVE MY **CREATOR**, BODY AND SOUL!

BUT IT WAS **BARON KARZA** WHO CREATED YOUR CENTAURIAN FORM, ARGON--

-- AND **KARZA'S DEAD!!**

UNGHH...



IS HE, MY DEAR SLUG?
IS HE??

SILENCE FALLS LIKE A SHROUD OVER THE BODY BANKS AS THE STUNNED SLUG SLIPS INTO SENSELESSNESS!

NEXT
PHAROID!

50¢
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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

ENTER:
MOLECULE MAN!



Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

SINCE THEIR SUPERMARKET STRUGGLE WITH ODD JOHN'S ARMY OF MUTANT INSECTS, THE MICRONAUTS HAVE BEEN SCATTERED ALL OVER UPSTATE NEW YORK.

BIOTRON, AS USUAL, WAS LEFT TO REPAIR THEIR CRIPPLED MICROSHIP--THE ENDEAVOR.

MARIONETTE

COMMANDER RANN

SOON REALIZING THAT THE NECESSARY PARTS WERE NOT TO BE FOUND IN ODD JOHN'S BARN, BIIOTRON HAS GONE OUT FORAGING IN THE HYDRO-COPTER.

HIS SEARCH HAS LED HIM TO THIS ISOLATED JUNK YARD.

PERHAPS HERE--AMIDST THESE MOUNTAINS OF UNRECYCLED MACHINERY--I WILL FIND WHAT I NEED TO REPAIR THE ENDEAVOR.

GUEST-STARRING--
CILICIA of SPARTAK

FIELD TRIP!

BUG

ACROYEAR

BILL MANTLO · PAT BRODERICK
WRITER · STORYTELLERS · ARTIST

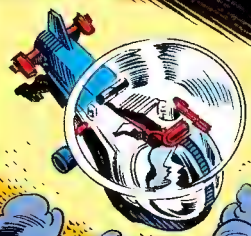
DANNY BULANADI
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BOB SHAREN, colorist

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR

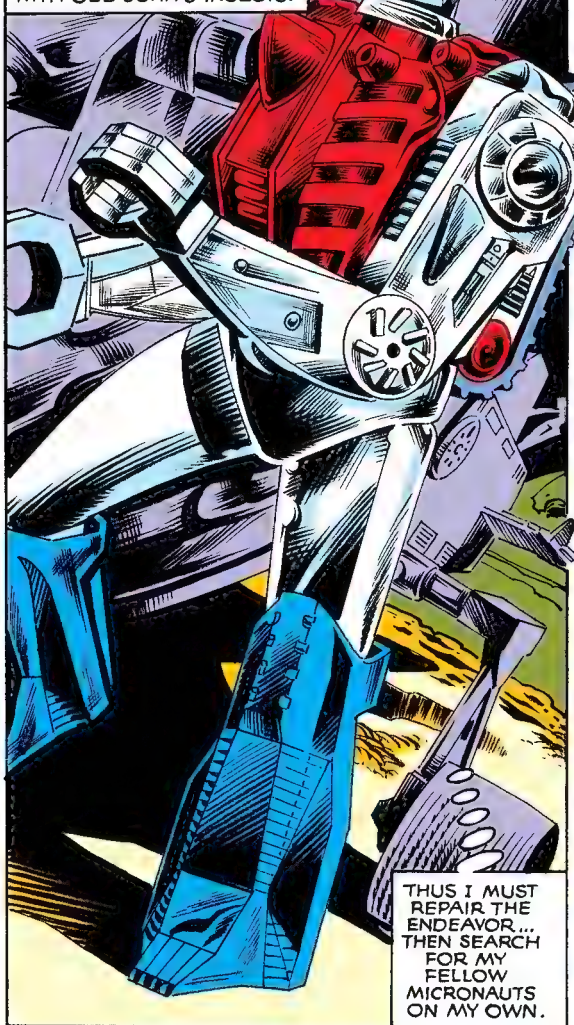
JIM SHOOTER
Ed.-in-CHIEF

BIOTRON LANDS THE HYDRO-COPTER...



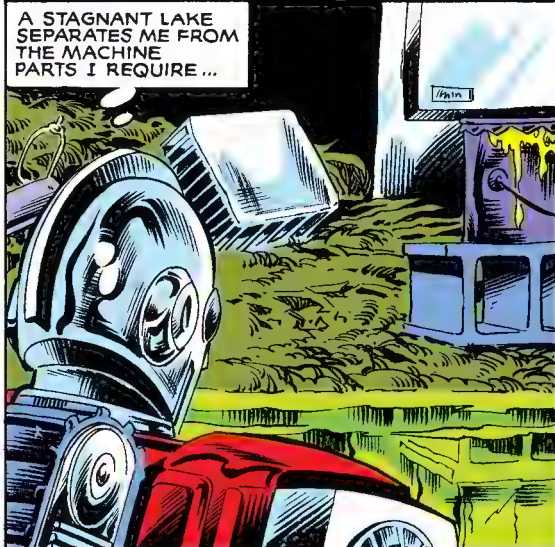
THE ENDEAVOR'S COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS ARE STILL INOPERATIVE. I AM UNABLE TO REACH THOSE MICRONAUTS IN THE ASTROSTATION--

-- AND I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO REESTABLISH TELEPATHIC CONTACT WITH COMMANDER RANN SINCE HE AND MARIONETTE DISAPPEARED DURING OUR BATTLE WITH ODD JOHN'S INSECTS.

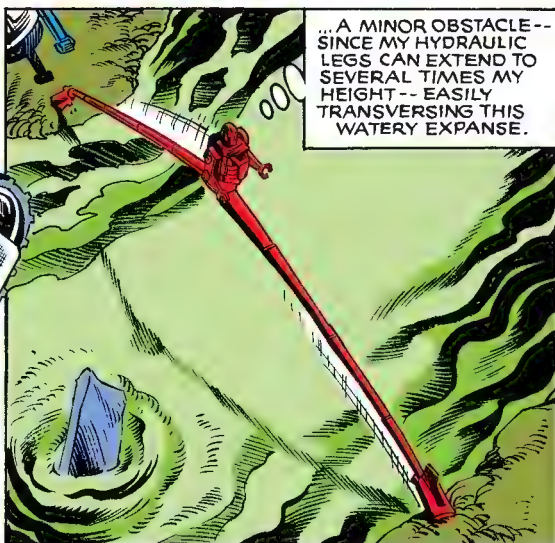


THUS I MUST REPAIR THE ENDEAVOR... THEN SEARCH FOR MY FELLOW MICRONAUTS ON MY OWN.

A STAGNANT LAKE SEPARATES ME FROM THE MACHINE PARTS I REQUIRE...



... A MINOR OBSTACLE-- SINCE MY HYDRAULIC LEGS CAN EXTEND TO SEVERAL TIMES MY HEIGHT-- EASILY TRANSVERSING THIS WATERY EXPANSE.



ONCE ON THE FAR SHORE, BIOTRON BEGINS SCAVENGING AMIDST THE DEBRIS FOR USABLE METALS AND WIRING... UNAWARE THAT HE IS NOT ALONE!

WE CANNOT
FAULT HIM
TOO MUCH
FOR HIS
OBLIVION,
FOR HIS
THOUGHTS
ARE EVER
ON THE
FATE
OF HIS
MISSING
COMRADES...

BUG. ACROYEAR. CILICIA.
COMMANDER RANN.
PRINCESS MARI.
LITTLE MICROTRON.

THE
MICRO-
NAUTS!

DO THEY LIVE -- OR AM I STRANDED HERE ON
EARTH, LEFT TO GRIEVE FOR THEM ALONE??

NO -- THEY **MUST** LIVE. THE PROBLEM
IS **FINDING** EACH OTHER ON THIS WORLD
ITS GIANT INHABITANTS CALL ... **EARTH**.

NEVER IN MY THOUSAND YEAR VOYAGE
WITH COMMANDER RANN HAVE I
ENCOUNTERED A PLANET AS
DANGER - FRAUGHT AS THIS!

MY BUILT-IN
SENSORS
INDICATE
SIZEABLE
QUANTITIES
OF **FREON**
GAS WITH-
IN THIS
CUBICLE...

...AN EXCELLENT
COOLANT FOR
THE ENDEAVOR'S
WARP DRIVE
ENGINES. I
WILL SECURE A
SUPPLY OF IT.

NO SOONER DOES
BIOTRON CLAMBER
INTO THE CAST-OFF
REFRIGERATOR, THAN...

SLAM!

I WAS CARELESS. MY WEIGHT HAS CAUSED
THE CUBICLE TO SHIFT, AND ITS HATCH
SLAMMED SHUT BEHIND ME -- ENVELOPING
ME IN DARKNESS. FORTUNATELY, AS
A BIOTRON 6000-SERIES ROBOID...



... THERE IS NO DARKNESS SO DENSE THAT MY ULTRASIGHT EYEBEAMS CAN NOT PENETRATE IT-- NOR ANY ENCLOSURE SO STRONG...



...THAT IT WILL WITHSTAND MY BIOTRONIC STRENGTH.

SKPLANG

Huh? WHUZZAT SOUND--??!

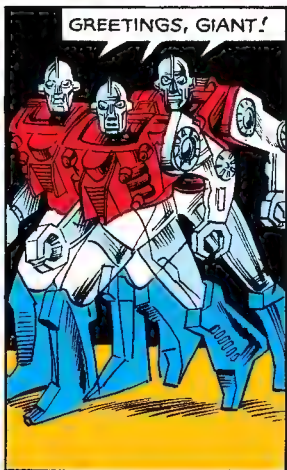


WHO DAT, DISTURBIN' MUH REST?



CAIN'T A MAN EVEN RELAX, HERE IN D' LAP O' LUXURY?

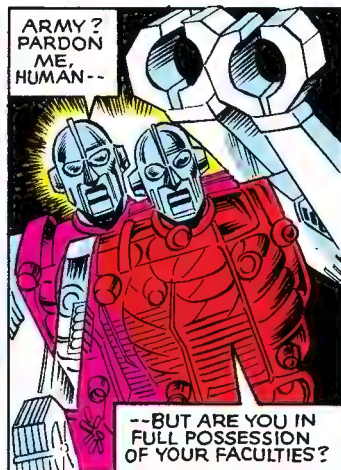
HOLY---! A LITTLE, TINY, METAL MUNCHKIN!



GREETINGS, GIANT!

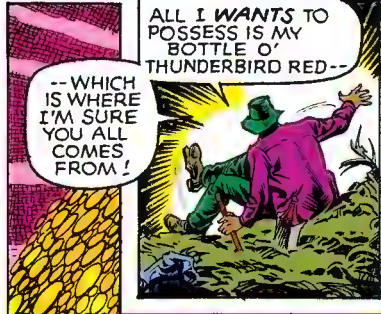


IT-- THEY TALK! THERE'S A' **ARMY** O' THE LITTLE BUGGERS!



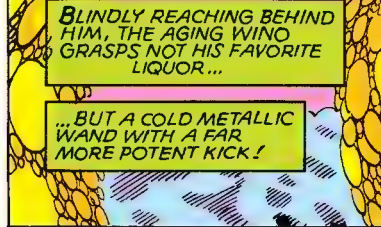
ARMY? PARDON ME, HUMAN--

--BUT ARE YOU IN FULL POSSESSION OF YOUR FACULTIES?



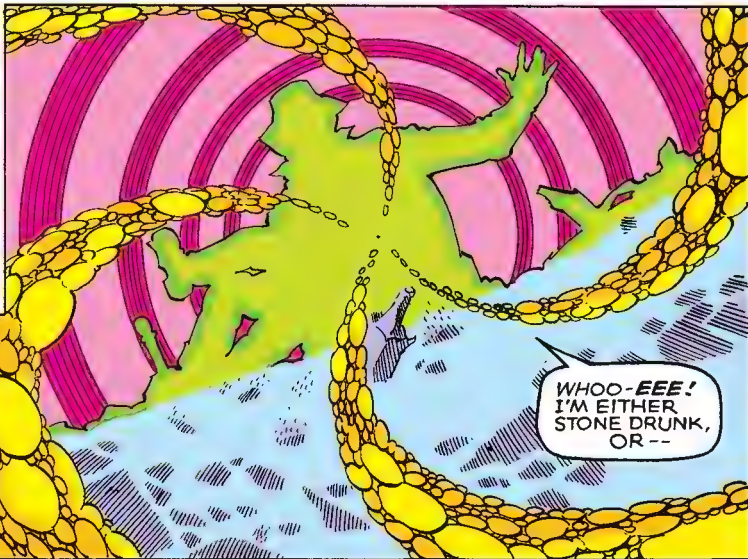
ALL I WANTS TO POSSESS IS MY BOTTLE O' THUNDERBIRD RED--

-- WHICH IS WHERE I'M SURE YOU ALL COMES FROM!



BLINDLY REACHING BEHIND HIM, THE AGING WINO GRASPS NOT HIS FAVORITE LIQUOR...

...BUT A COLD METALLIC WAND WITH A FAR MORE POTENT KICK!



WHOO-EEE! I'M EITHER STONE DRUNK, OR--

FOLLOWING HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE MAN THING, THE MOLECULE MAN'S OWN MIND HAD BEEN TRAPPED INSIDE HIS MOLECULE WAND!

HE WAS ABLE TO FREE HIMSELF BY TAKING OVER THE BODY OF REED RICHARDS, LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

--THE **MOLECULE MAN** LIVES AGAIN!

THE WINO IS GONE-- HIS BODY NOW INHABITED BY THE MIND OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SUPER-VILLAINS ON EARTH--

-- A BEING WHO CAN CONTROL MOLECULES-- THE SMALLEST GROUPS OF ATOMS FROM WHICH MATTER IS COMPOSED-- AND THEREFORE, CAN CONTROL ANYTHING!

AFTER TERRORIZING MANHATTAN ISLAND, THE MOLECULE MAN ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY RICHARDS' THREE PARTNERS-- THE INVISIBLE GIRL, THE HUMAN TORCH, AND THE MIGHTY THING!

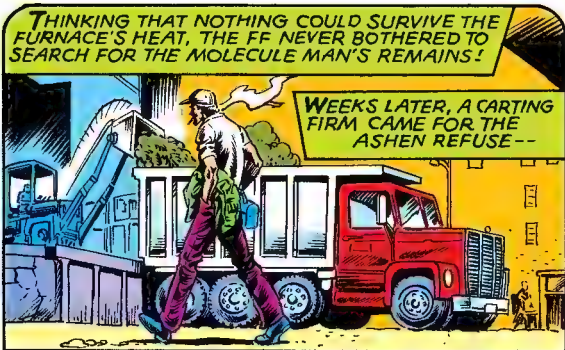
HE HAD OVERLOOKED ONE SMALL FACT, HOWEVER...

... HE COULD CONTROL ALL MOLECULES SAVE FOR THOSE UNSTABLE MOLECULES WHICH COMPRISED THE COSTUMES OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

THE RESULTANT FEEDBACK SHORT-CIRCUITED HIS MENTAL CONTROL OVER REED RICHARDS...

... WHO, BREAKING CONTACT BY DROPPING THE MOLECULE WAND, LET IT FALL DOWN THE SMOKESTACK OF A NEARBY FACTORY FURNACE!

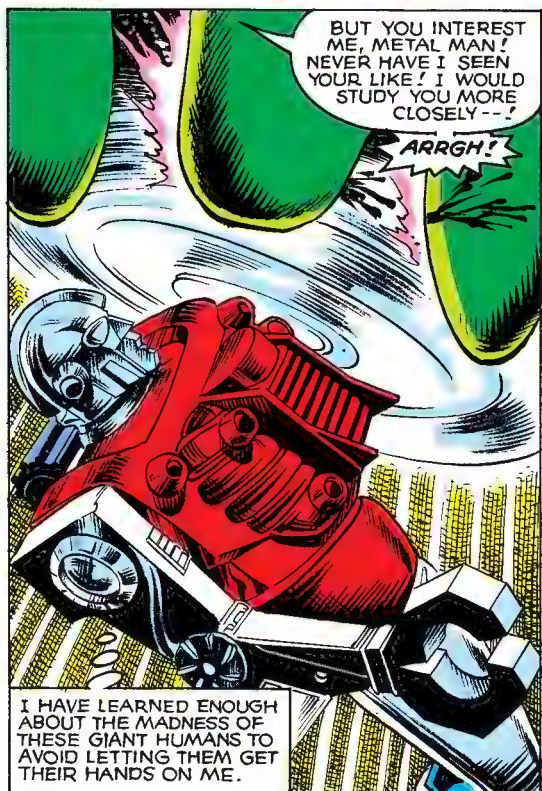
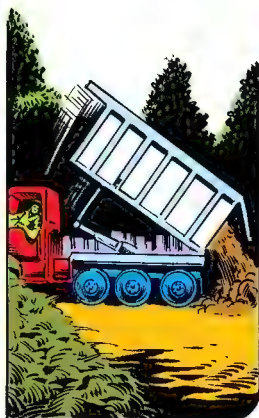
THE WAND, OF COURSE, ONCE AGAIN CONTAINED THE IMPRISONED ID OF THE MOLECULE MAN!



--CARRIED IT UPSTATE--



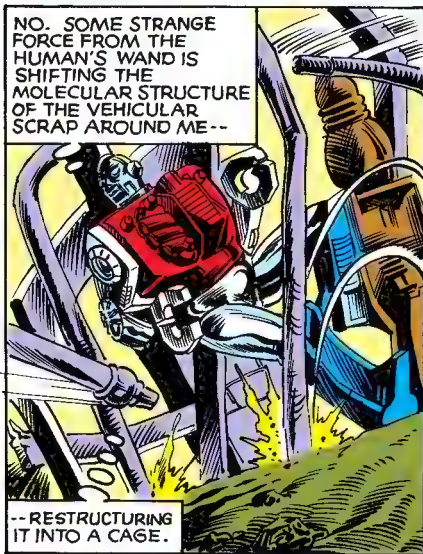
--AND DUMPED IT AMIDST THE DEBRIS OF A RURAL LANDFILL PROJECT!





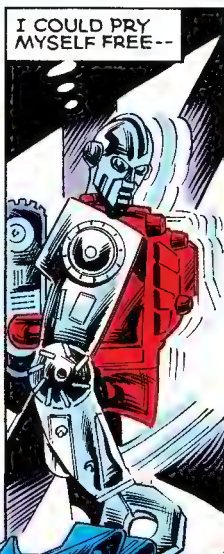
STOP, DIMINUTIVE ONE!
I-- THE MOLECULE
MAN -- COMMAND
YOU!

UNFORTUNATELY, HE HAS JUST
REMEMBERED. BUT, IF I CAN REACH
THE HYDRO-COPTER BEFORE...

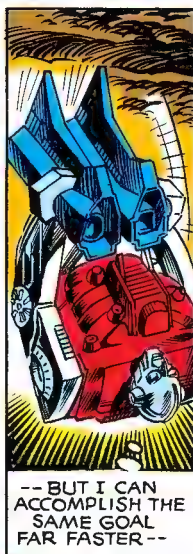


NO. SOME STRANGE
FORCE FROM THE
HUMAN'S WAND IS
SHIFTING THE
MOLECULAR STRUCTURE
OF THE VEHICULAR
SCRAP AROUND ME--

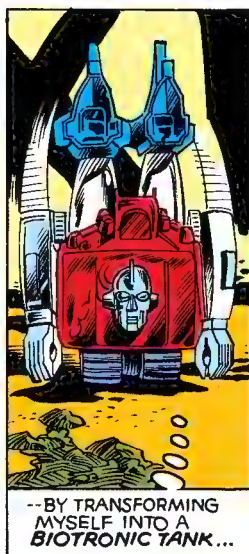
--RESTRUCTURING
IT INTO A CAGE.



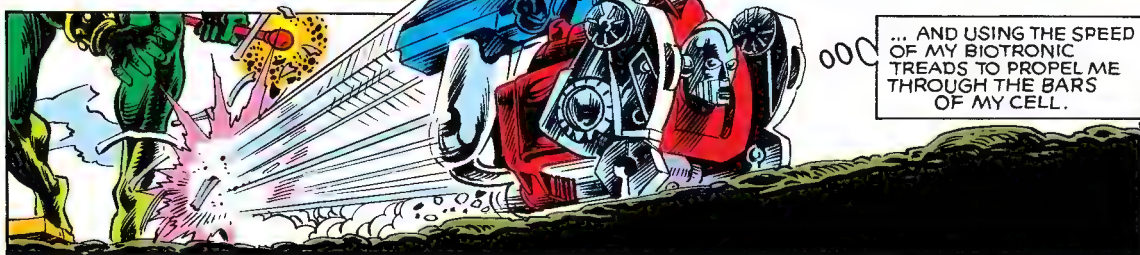
I COULD PRY
MYSELF FREE--



-- BUT I CAN
ACCOMPLISH THE
SAME GOAL
FAR FASTER --



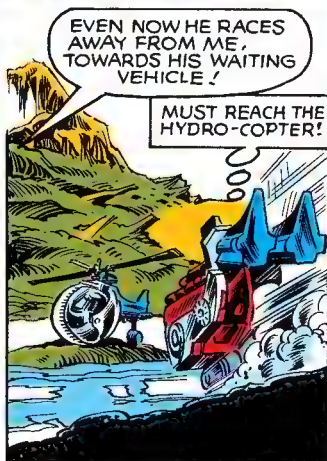
--BY TRANSFORMING
MYSELF INTO A
BIOTRONIC TANK...



... AND USING THE SPEED
OF MY BIOTRONIC
TREADS TO PROPEL ME
THROUGH THE BARS
OF MY CELL.

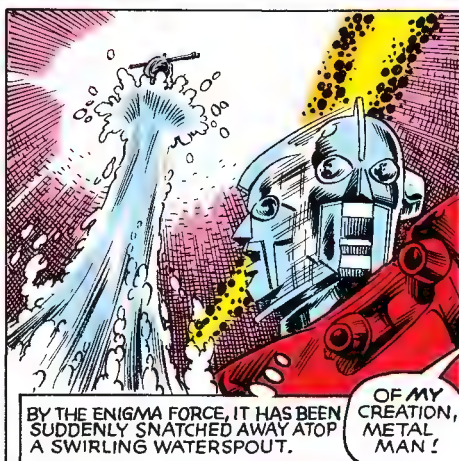


THE ROBOT-- IF
SUCH HE IS--
IS AMAZING!



EVEN NOW HE RACES
AWAY FROM ME,
TOWARDS HIS WAITING
VEHICLE!

MUST REACH THE
HYDRO-COPTER!



BY THE ENIGMA FORCE, IT HAS BEEN
SUDDENLY SNATCHED AWAY ATOP
A SWIRLING WATERSPOUT.

OF MY
CREATION,
METAL
MAN!

I KNOW NOT WHETHER YOU SOUGHT YOUR VEHICLE AS A WEAPON OR AS A MEANS OF ESCAPE--

--BUT, IN EITHER CASE, IT IS NOW BEYOND YOUR GRASP!

YOU ARE MINE TO TOY WITH OR TO TERMINATE... AS I SEE FIT!

THE HUMAN SOARS ABOVE ME ON A STRANGE BOARD ANIMATED BY HIS MOLECULAR POWERS.

YET I, TOO, MAY FIND WEAPONS AMIDST THE DEBRIS.

Eh? YOU HURL HUBCAPS AT ME AT INCREDIBLE SPEEDS?!

FOOL! I HAVE ONLY TO POINT MY MOLECULE WAND TO TRANSFORM THEM INTO A RAIN OF FLOWERS!

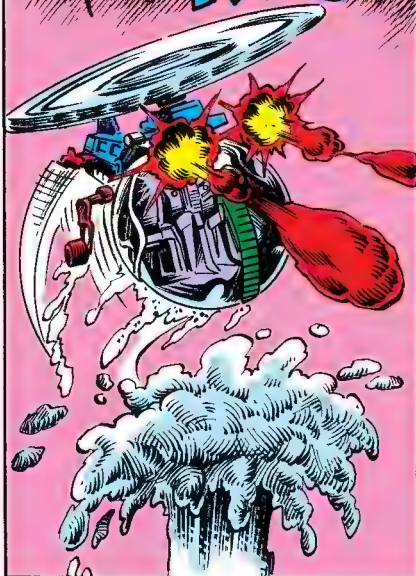
PERHAPS BIOTRON HOPED THE MOLECULE MAN WOULD REACT IN PRECISELY THAT WAY--

...GIVING BIOTRON THE CHANCE HE NEEDS TO EXTEND HIS HYDRAULIC LEGS AND GAIN THE HYDRO-COPTER!

--FOR, WHERE THE HUBCAPS WOULD SCARCELY HAVE HARMED THE VILLAIN, THE FLOWERS EFFECTIVELY BLOCK HIS VISION...

WITH THE HYDRO-COPTER'S LASER-CANNON, I WILL AT LAST BE ABLE TO ACT-- NOT SIMPLY REACT!

VREEOW

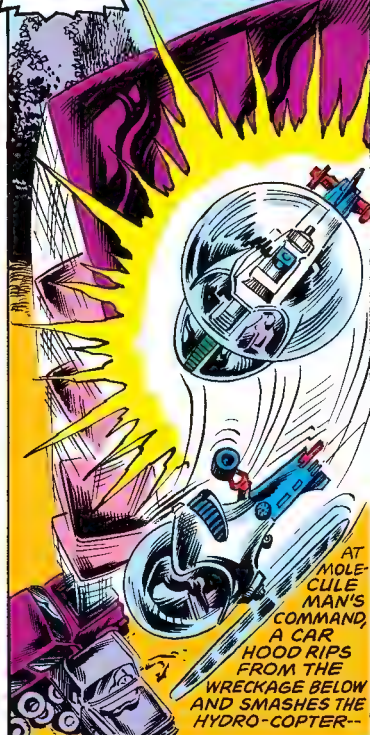


SO, THE METAL INSECT HAS A LASER STING? STILL, THE ONLY WAY TO DEAL WITH INSECTS OF ANY KIND--



--IS TO SWAT THEM FROM THE SKY!

SPANG!



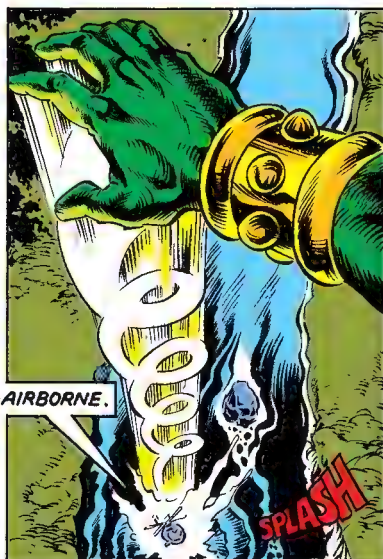
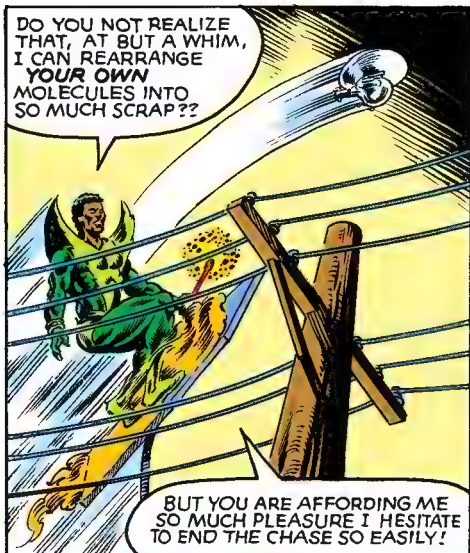
AT MOLECULE MAN'S COMMAND, A CAR HOOD RIPS FROM THE WRECKAGE BELOW AND SMASHES THE HYDRO-COPTER--

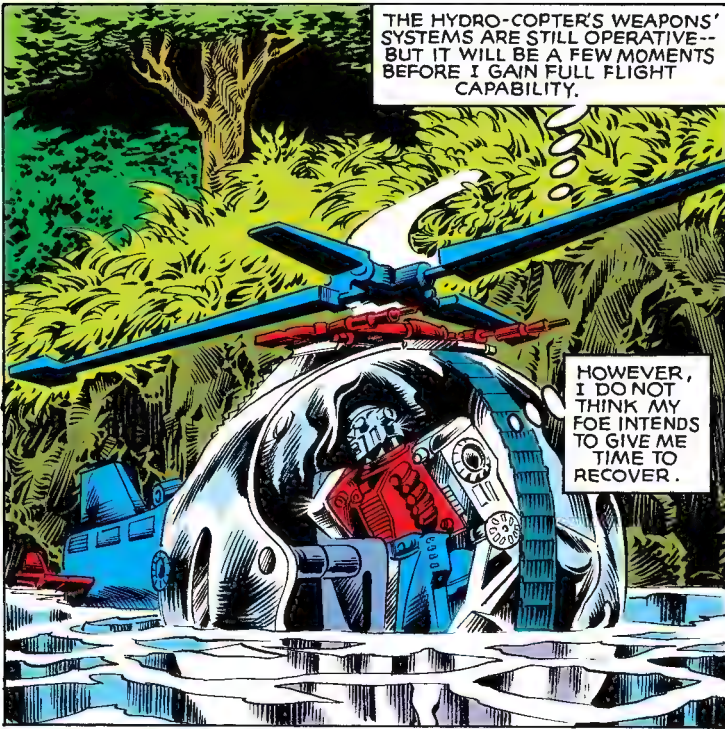
-- AND, AS BIOTRON TRIES TO REGAIN CONTROL OF HIS CAREENING CRAFT, THE MOLECULE MAN SENDS HIS SOARING IRONING BOARD AT HIM AGAIN!

THERE IS NOWHERE YOU CAN FLY, METAL MAN! NOWHERE YOU CAN ESCAPE!

NOWHERE THAT IS SAFE FROM THE MATTER-MANIPULATING MIGHT OF THE MASTER OF MOLECULES!

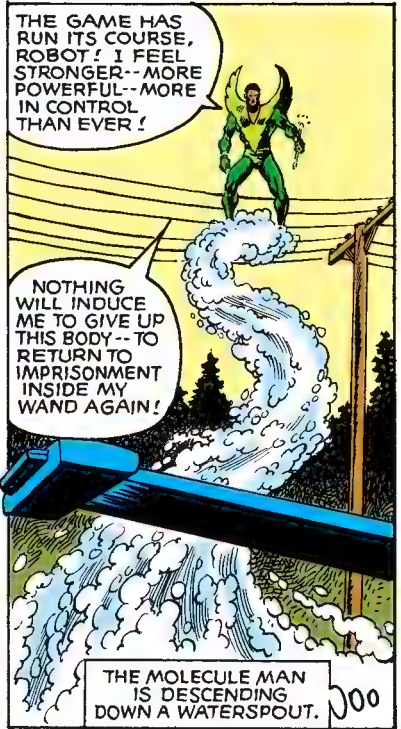






THE HYDRO-COPTER'S WEAPONS' SYSTEMS ARE STILL OPERATIVE-- BUT IT WILL BE A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE I GAIN FULL FLIGHT CAPABILITY.

HOWEVER, I DO NOT THINK MY FOE INTENDS TO GIVE ME TIME TO RECOVER.



THE GAME HAS RUN ITS COURSE, ROBOT! I FEEL STRONGER-- MORE POWERFUL-- MORE IN CONTROL THAN EVER!

NOTHING WILL INDUCE ME TO GIVE UP THIS BODY-- TO RETURN TO IMPRISONMENT INSIDE MY WAND AGAIN!

THE MOLECULE MAN IS DESCENDING DOWN A WATERSPOUT.



IF HE REACHES ME, HE MAY DECIDE TO DESTROY ME AS A FURTHER TEST OF HIS POWER.

TO DIE--NEVER TO SEE MY FRIENDS, MY FELLOW MICRONAUTS AGAIN... I...

NO! WHILE AWARENESS REMAINS IN MY CIRCUITS-- I FIGHT!



WHAT'S THIS, ROBOT? YOUR LAST FEEBLE STAB AT RESISTANCE?

YOUR ILL-TIMED LASER BURSTS HAVE NOTEVEN HIT ME, LET ALONE HARMED ME!

THAT IS BECAUSE I AM NOT AIMING AT YOU, MOLECULE MAN--



"-- BUT AT THE POLE SUPPORTING THE HIGH-VOLTAGE WIRES BEHIND YOU!

I NEED NOT SPEND MORE TIME TESTING MY POWERS OUT ON YOU, ROBOT! I... "SKRAK"??!



THE POWER-POLE--
THAT WAS WHAT
YOUR LASER
BLAST STRUCK--

--SHEARING IT OFF
AND DROPPING ITS
HIGH-VOLTAGE WIRES
TOWARDS WHERE
I STAND--

--ANKLE-DEEP
IN... WATER!



YEEAGGH!

SO STUNNED IS
THE MOLECULE
MAN THAT HE
DROPS HIS WAND...

... IMMEDIATELY LOSING CONTROL OF
THE BODY OF THE BESOTTED WINO,
WHO FALLS FORWARD DAZEDLY
ONTO THE GREENSWARD ...



... AS THE MOLECULE
MAN HIMSELF BE-
COMES IMPRISONED
ONCE MORE IN THE
MOLECULE WAND
WHICH IS CARRIED AWAY
BY THE CURRENT!

D' THINGS
I'S
SEEN...!

THE MOLECULE MAN IS GONE.
THE MASSIVE ELECTRIC SHOCK
FORCED HIM TO RETURN
FROM WHENCE HE CAME.



AND SO MUST I
NOW RE-
TURN TO
ODD JOHN'S
BARN--

...THERE TO REPAIR
THE ENDEAVOR AS
BEST I CAN, AND USE
IT TO SEARCH FOR...



...THE
MICRONAUTS!

OH, BIOTRON--
WE WERE
AFRAID WE'D
NEVER SEE
YOU AGAIN!

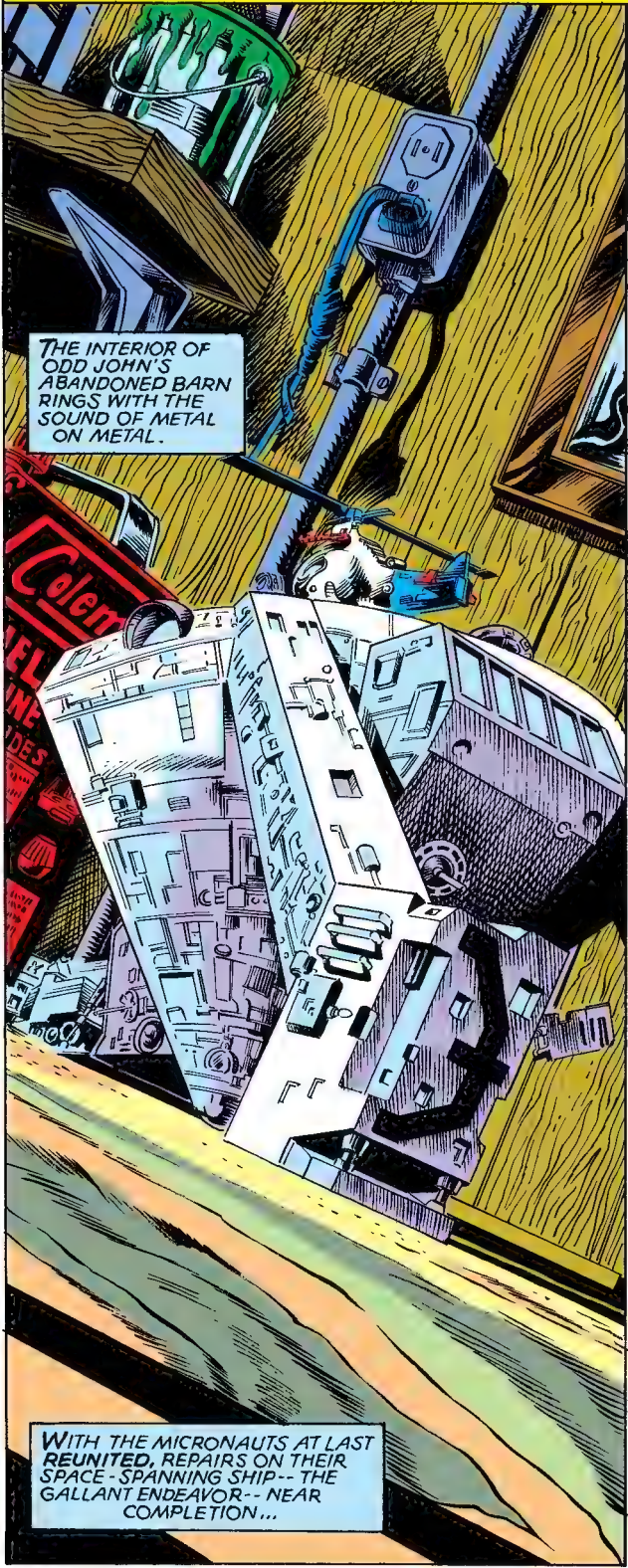
WHEN WE
CAME BACK
AND FOUND
THE ENDEAVOR
ABANDONED--!

LOOKS LIKE
WE'RE A
TEAM
AGAIN!

NEXT ISSUE: CATASTROPHE IN A COMPUTER COMPLEX AS THE MICROS ENCOUNTER... **COMPUTREX!**

A MIGHTY
MICRONAUTS
BONUS
FEATURE!

INSIDE THE HOMEWORLD MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR!



THE INTERIOR OF
ODD JOHN'S
ABANDONED BARN
RINGS WITH THE
SOUND OF METAL
ON METAL.

WITH THE MICRONAUTS AT LAST
REUNITED, REPAIRS ON THEIR
SPACE-SPANNING SHIP-- THE
GALLANT ENDEAVOR-- NEAR
COMPLETION...

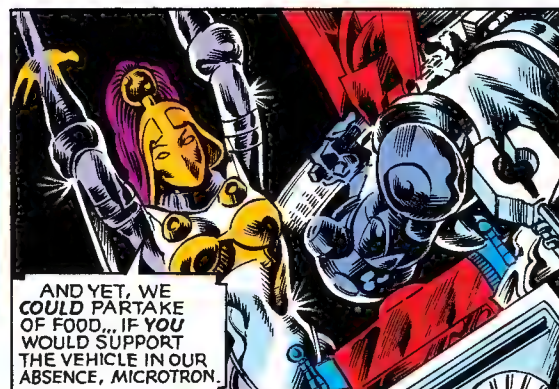
... DESPITE WELL-MEANING
INTERFERENCE FROM A CERTAIN
IRREPRESSIBLE LITTLE ROBOD,
MICROTRON!

YOO-HOO!
FELLOW 'NAUTS!
YOU'VE BEEN
WORKING ALL
MORNING!
ANYONE WANT
TO BREAK FOR
LUNCH?

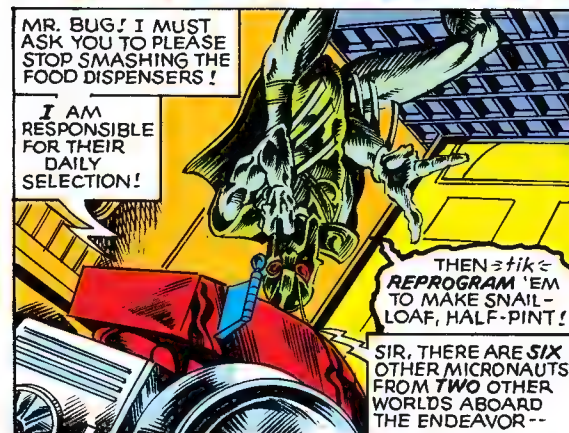
LADY CILICIA?
PRINCE
ACROYEAR?
CAN I WHIP
UP SOME SORT
OF SPARTAK
SPECIAL JUST
FOR YOU?



CILICIA AND I ARE IN THE MIST OF A RATHER DELICATE RECALIBRATION OF OUR GROUND-EXPLORING STAR-SEARCHER'S SENSOR SYSTEMS, LITTLE ONE.



AND YET, WE COULD PARTAKE OF FOOD... IF YOU WOULD SUPPORT THE VEHICLE IN OUR ABSENCE, MICROTRON.

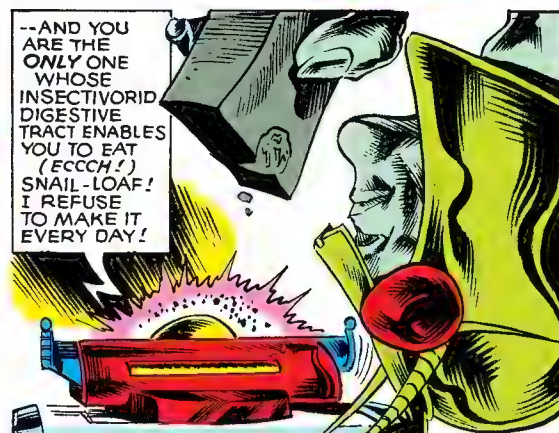


MR. BUG! I MUST ASK YOU TO PLEASE STOP SMASHING THE FOOD DISPENSERS!

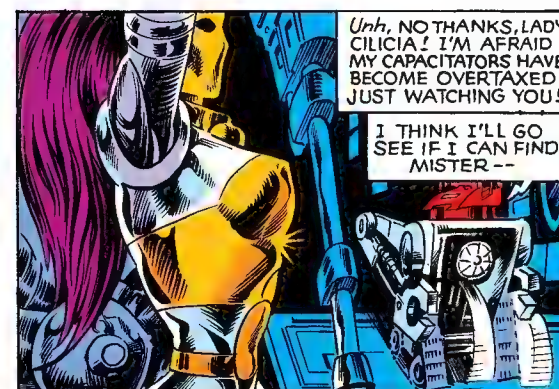
I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR DAILY SELECTION!

THEN $\approx$ *tik* $\approx$ REPROGRAM 'EM TO MAKE SNAIL-LOAF, HALF-PINT!

SIR, THERE ARE SIX OTHER MICRONAUTS FROM TWO OTHER WORLDS ABOARD THE ENDEAVOR--

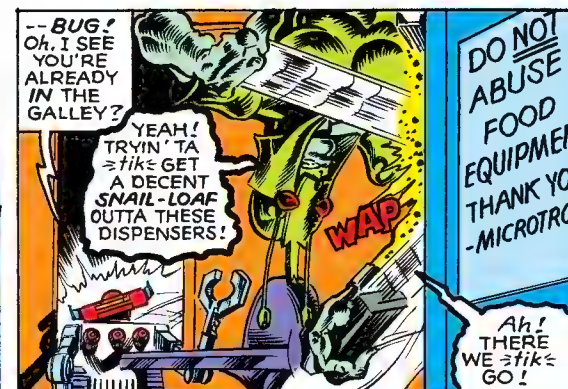


--AND YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHOSE INSECTIVOROUS DIGESTIVE TRACT ENABLES YOU TO EAT (ECCCH!) SNAIL-LOAF! I REFUSE TO MAKE IT EVERY DAY!



Unh, NO THANKS, LADY CILICIA! I'M AFRAID MY CAPACITATORS HAVE BECOME OVERTAXED JUST WATCHING YOU!

I THINK I'LL GO SEE IF I CAN FIND MISTER --

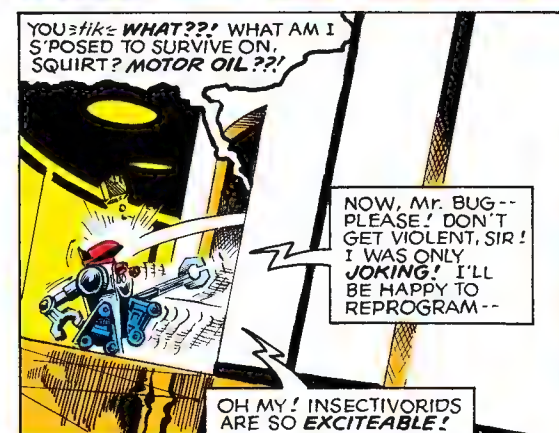


--BUG! Oh, I SEE YOU'RE ALREADY IN THE GALLEY?

YEAH! TRYIN' TA $\approx$ *tik* $\approx$ GET A DECENT SNAIL-LOAF OUTTA THESE DISPENSERS!

DO NOT ABUSE FOOD EQUIPMENT! THANK YOU -MICROTRON!

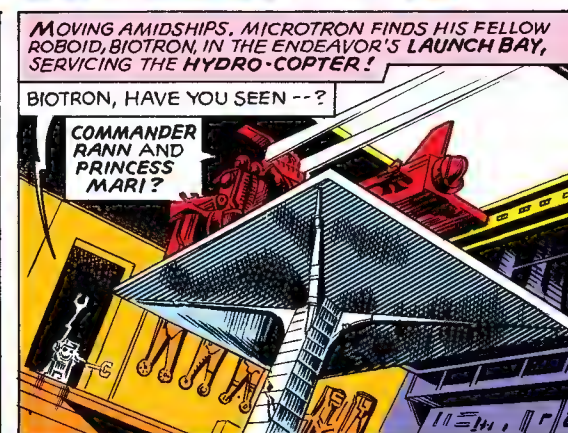
Ah! THERE WE $\approx$ *tik* $\approx$ GO!



YOU $\approx$ *tik* $\approx$ WHAT??! WHAT AM I S'POSED TO SURVIVE ON, SQUIRT? MOTOR OIL??!

NOW, MR. BUG-- PLEASE! DON'T GET VIOLENT, SIR! I WAS ONLY JOKING! I'LL BE HAPPY TO REPROGRAM--

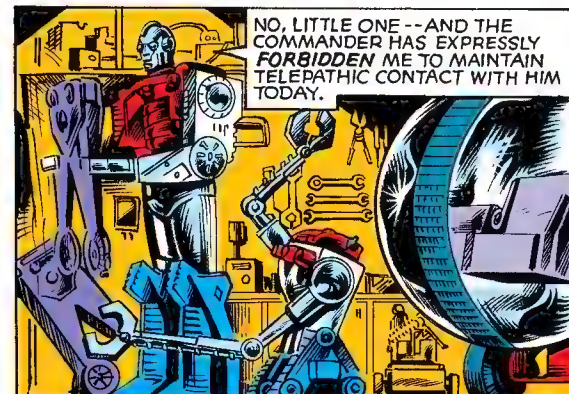
OH MY! INSECTIVORIDS ARE SO EXCITEABLE!



MOVING AMIDSHIPS, MICROTRON FINDS HIS FELLOW ROBROID, BIOTRON, IN THE ENDEAVOR'S LAUNCH BAY, SERVING THE HYDRO-COPTER!

BIOTRON, HAVE YOU SEEN --?

COMMANDER RANN AND PRINCESS MARI?



NO, LITTLE ONE -- AND THE COMMANDER HAS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN ME TO MAINTAIN TELEPATHIC CONTACT WITH HIM TODAY.

RACING AWAY, MICROTRON HASTENS TO THE ENDEAVOR'S BRIDGE AND BEGINS A COMPUTER SCAN OF THE SHIP'S INTERIOR!



NOR HAVE I TIME TO LOOK FOR THEM. THERE ARE GLIDER-PACS TO BE ANTIGRAVITIZED, COMPUTER CHECKS TO RUN...

COMPUTER CHECK? OF COURSE, I CAN LOCATE THEM THAT WAY!

THEY MAY NOT WISH TO BE LOCATED, LITTLE ONE.

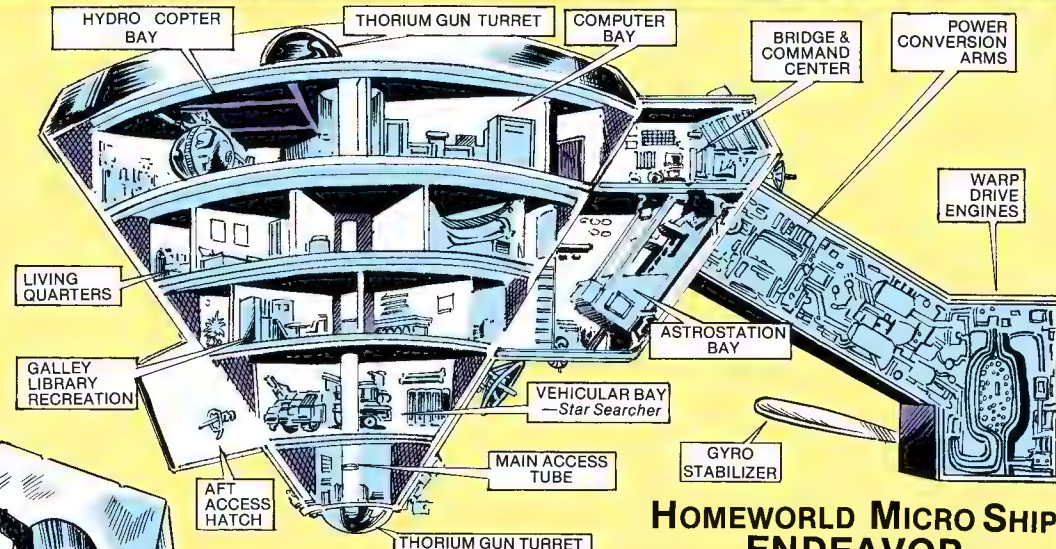
I WONDER WHAT BIOTRON MEANT WHEN HE SAID PRINCESS MARI AND COMMANDER RANN MIGHT NOT WANT TO BE LOCATED?

Classification: Exploratory Vessel
Design: Pre-Warp Drive, converted
Designer: Chief Scientist Karza
Mission: To explore the Microverse
Crew: Commander Arcturus Rann, Micronaut;
Biotron-6000 roboid, Helmsman

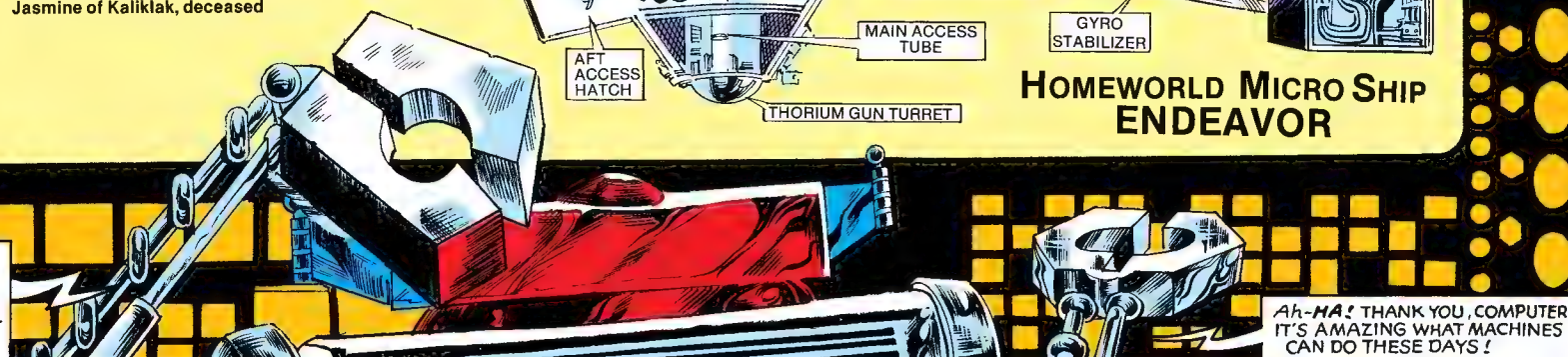
Revised Programme

Crew: Commander Arcturus Rann, Micronaut
Princess Mari (Marionette), Micronaut
Prince Acroyear, Micronaut
Bug, Micronaut
Microtron, Micronaut
Biotron, Micronaut

Additional Crew Update
Cilicia of Spartak, deceased
Jasmine of Kaliklak, deceased



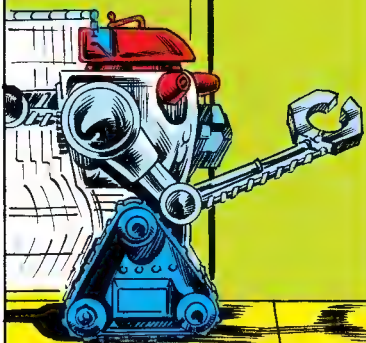
HOMEWORLD MICRO SHIP ENDEAVOR



Ah-HA! THANK YOU, COMPUTER! IT'S AMAZING WHAT MACHINES CAN DO THESE DAYS!

AFTER DESCENDING VIA A COLUMN OF COMPRESSED AIR THROUGH THE ENDEAVOR'S MAIN ACCESS TUBE, MICROTRON HEADS FOR COMMANDER RANN'S LIVING QUARTERS!

I'VE NO WISH TO INTERRUPT THE COMMANDER IN THE MIDST OF HIS MEDITATIONS, BUT HE AND THE PRINCESS MARI HAVE GROWN QUITE CLOSE AS OF LATE.



I CAN'T GET OVER HOW OLD IT MAKES ME FEEL, WATCHING THE PRINCESS BLOSSOM FROM A YOUNG GIRL INTO A YOUNG WOMAN-- A FULL-FLEDGED FIGHTING MEMBER OF THE MICRONAUTS!

I WAS DESIGNED AS HER TUTOR AND GUARDIAN, BUT SHE SEEMS TO HAVE OUTGROWN HER NEED FOR BOTH SINCE LEAVING HOMEWORLD'S THRONE IN THE CARE OF HER BROTHER, PRINCE ARGON!

STILL, I CAN'T HELP FEELING FATHERLY CONCERN FOR HER WELL-BEING!

Ah, HERE ARE COMMANDER RANN'S QUARTERS NOW! EXCUSE ME, SIR, BUT HAVE YOU SEEN THE PR-PR-PRIN...

Oh, ARCTURUS, MY LOVE!!

PRINCESS MARI!

OH, MY!
OH, MY!
OH, MY!

WHEN WILL I LEARN TO RESPECT A PRIVACY-SEAL? WHEN??!



I AM TIME TRAVELER! WHEN LAST I DIRECTED YOUR GAZE TOWARDS THE SUBMICROSCOPIC PLANET HOMEWORLD--



-- IT WAS THAT YOU MIGHT BEHOLD AN UNNATURAL RAIN OF FIRE LEADING THE SUSPICIOUS YOUNG SLUG TO THE RUINS OF BARON KARZA'S DREADED BODY BANKS!

THERE THE BEAUTIFUL SLUG WAS BETRAYED INTO CAPTIVITY BY HER OWN BELOVED PRINCE OF ARGON, FORCE COMMANDER!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

THEY HAVE RIDDEN THROUGH THE NIGHT, AWAY FROM HOMEWORLD'S ROYAL CITY AND OUT INTO THE VAST SYANITE DESERT, A WASTELAND STRETCHING OVER THE PLANET'S FIFTH MOLECULE!

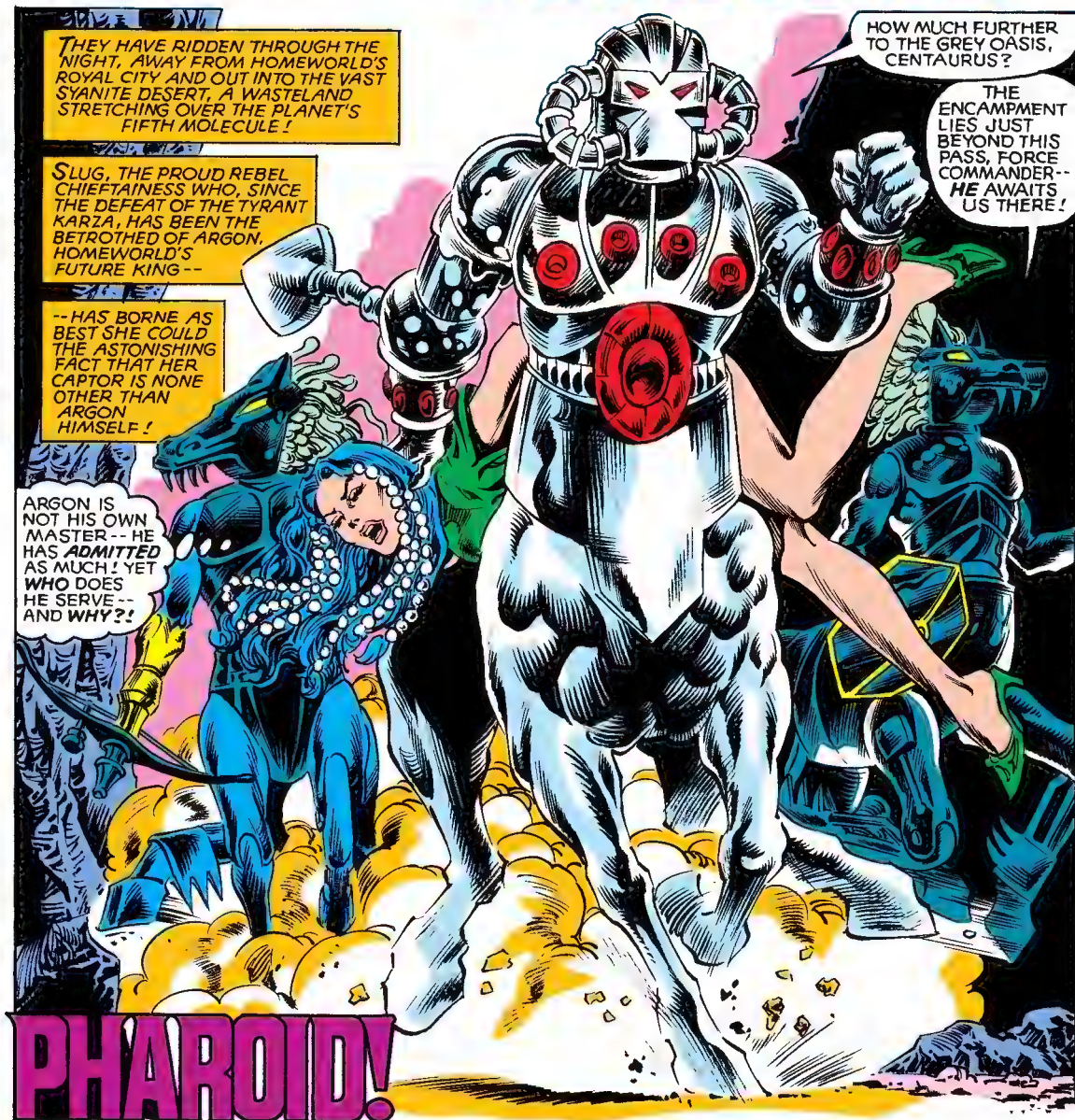
SLUG, THE PROUD REBEL CHIEFTAINNESS WHO, SINCE THE DEFEAT OF THE TYRANT KARZA, HAS BEEN THE BETROTHED OF ARGON, HOMEWORLD'S FUTURE KING--

-- HAS BORNE AS BEST SHE COULD THE ASTONISHING FACT THAT HER CAPTOR IS NONE OTHER THAN ARGON HIMSELF!

ARGON IS NOT HIS OWN MASTER-- HE HAS ADMITTED AS MUCH! YET WHO DOES HE SERVE-- AND WHY?!

HOW MUCH FURTHER TO THE GREY OASIS, CENTAURUS?

THE ENCAMPMENT LIES JUST BEYOND THIS PASS, FORCE COMMANDER-- HE AWAITS US THERE!



PHAROID!

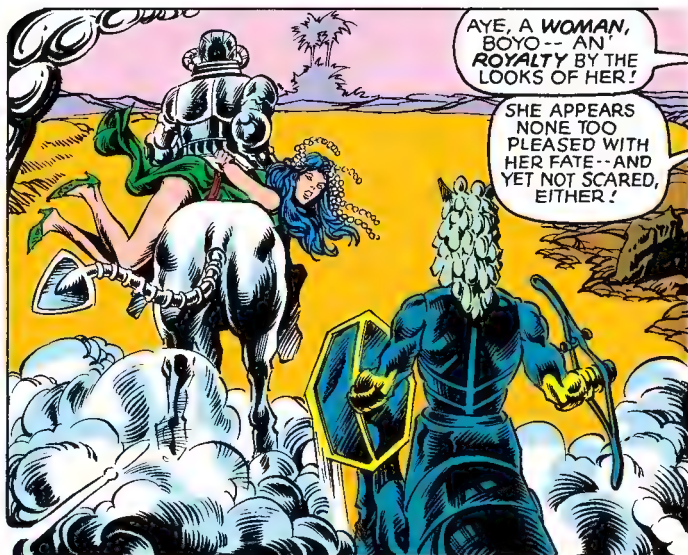


UNBEKNOWNST TO THE SOUTHWARD SPEEDING CENTAURUS CARAVAN, THEIR PROGRESS IS OBSERVED FROM A SAND-RIDGE ABOVE!

YOUR EYES ARE AS SHARP AS A SYANITE SAND-HAWK'S, MARGRACE--

--AND NO MAN RIDES A FASTER OSTRA! YOUR NEWS WAS RIGHT ON ALL COUNTS!

THE FOUR-LEGGED ONES HAVE RAIDED THE ROYAL CITY-- AND RETURNED WITH A HUMAN CAPTIVE!



AYE, A WOMAN, BOYO-- AN' ROYALTY BY THE LOOKS OF HER!

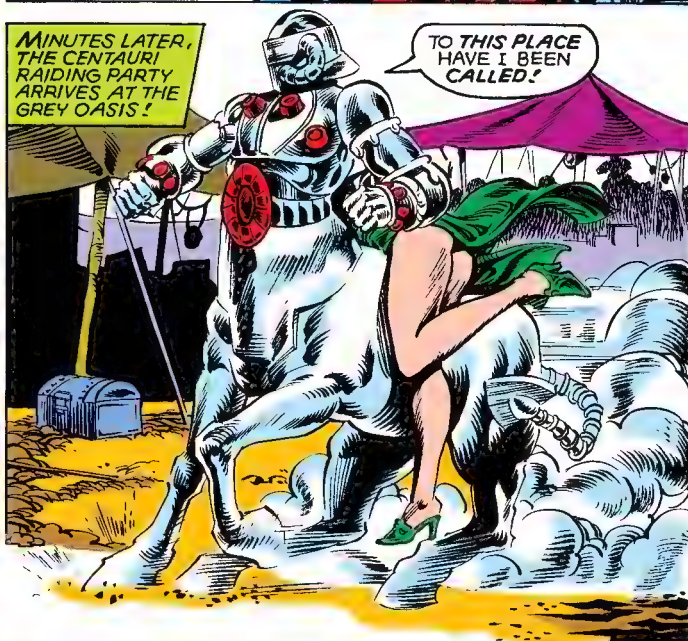
SHE APPEARS NONE TOO PLEASSED WITH HER FATE--AND YET NOT SCARED, EITHER!



WE SAVE 'ER, THEN?

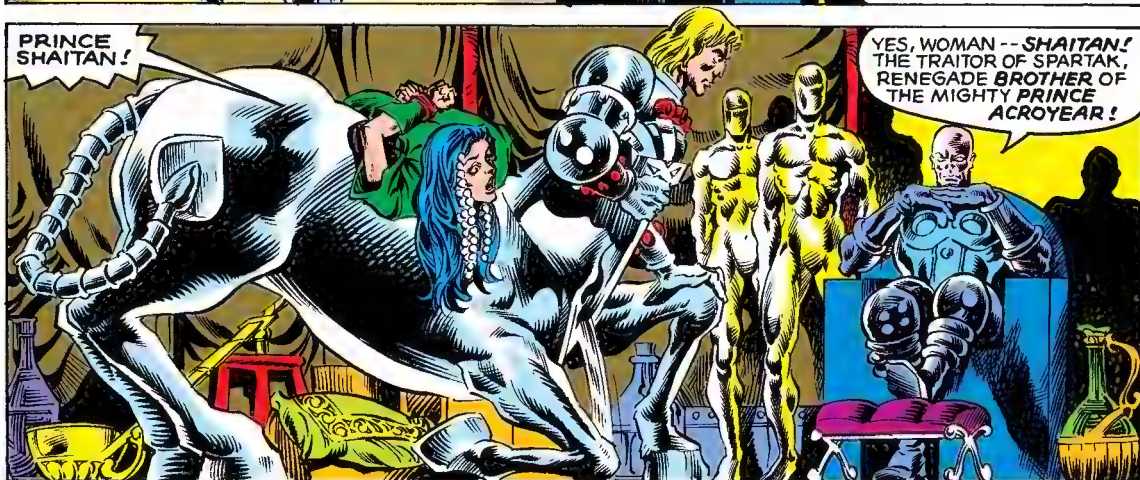
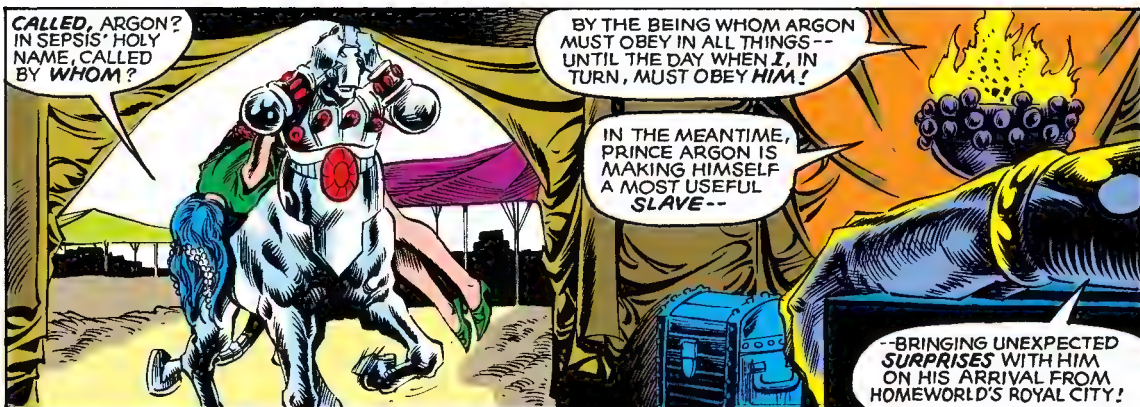
AYE, OLD FRIEND-- BUT IT WOULD BE FOLLY TO HIT THE CENTAURI HERE, WHERE THEY'D HAVE THE WHOLE DESERT TO RUN OFF TO!

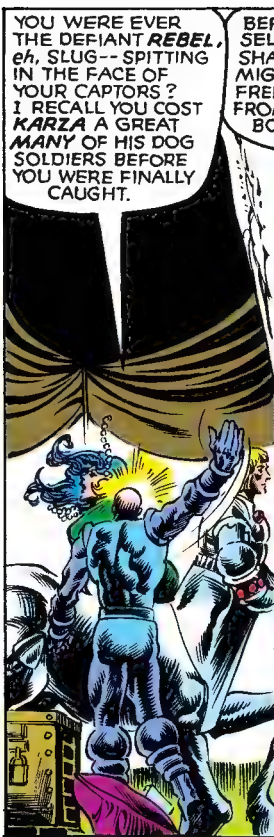
WE'LL WAIT, UNTIL THEY THINK THEMSELVES SAFE IN THEIR TENTS!



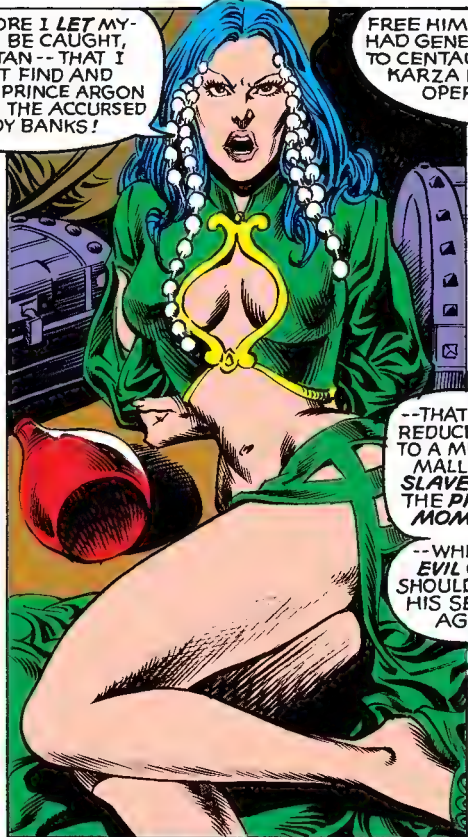
MINUTES LATER, THE CENTAURI RAIDING PARTY ARRIVES AT THE GREY OASIS!

TO THIS PLACE HAVE I BEEN CALLED!

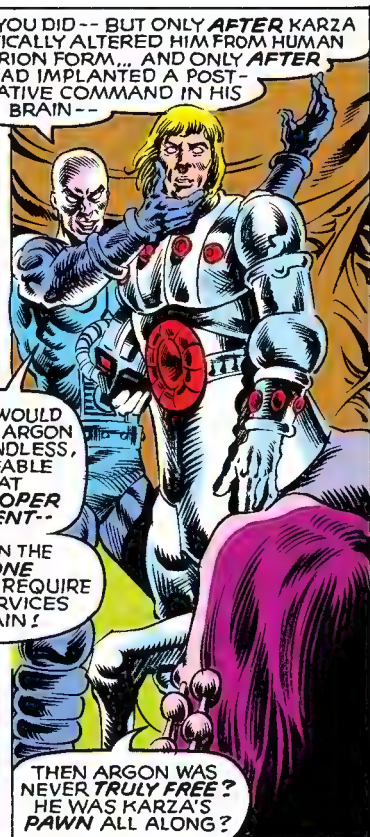




YOU WERE EVER THE DEFIANT **REBEL**, eh, SLUG-- SPITTING IN THE FACE OF YOUR CAPTORS? I RECALL YOU COST **KARZA** A GREAT **MANY** OF HIS DOG SOLDIERS BEFORE YOU WERE FINALLY CAUGHT.



BEFORE I **LET** MYSELF BE CAUGHT, SHAITAN-- THAT I MIGHT FIND AND FREE PRINCE ARGON FROM THE ACCURSED BODY BANKS!



FREE HIM YOU DID-- BUT ONLY **AFTER** KARZA HAD GENETICALLY ALTERED HIM FROM HUMAN TO CENTAURION FORM... AND ONLY **AFTER** KARZA HAD IMPLANTED A POST-OPERATIVE COMMAND IN HIS BRAIN--

--THAT WOULD REDUCE ARGON TO A MINDLESS, MALLEABLE **SLAVE** AT THE **PROPER** MOMENT--

--WHEN THE **EVIL** ONE SHOULD REQUIRE HIS SERVICES AGAIN!

THEN ARGON WAS NEVER **TRULY** FREE? HE WAS KARZA'S **PAWN** ALL ALONG?



YES, WOMAN! **YES!** ER? WHO DARES ENTER MY TENT UNBIDDEN?

FORGIVE ME, RESSURECTED ONE, BUT WE ARE **ATTACKED!**

WHAT MEAN YOU, CENTAURUS?! **ATTACKED?! BY WHOM--?!**



BY-- **EE-EE-EE-II-II!**

AH, YE WIELD A **BLASTER** LIKE YE WERE BORN TO IT, BOYO!

SPUR YOUR **OSTRAS**, AEGYPTIANS! **RIDE** THE SAND-SCUM DOWN!

CURSE THESE CRETINOUS CENTAURI! THEY ASSURED ME THAT THEIR GREY OASIS WAS UNAPPROACHABLE-- SURROUNDED BY A VAST, UNINHABITED WASTELAND-- THAT THEY THEMSELVES WERE INVINCIBLE!

YET THEY FALL LIKE GRAIN BEFORE A SCYTHER TO THESE OSTRARIDING RAIDERS!

WHO BE THESE DESERT RAIDERS? FROM WHAT LAND DO THEY HAIL?!

RIDE 'EM DOWN, LADS! SHOW 'EM NO QUARTER! MAKE 'EM FEAR THE DAY THEY EVER DRAGGED A HUMAN CAPTIVE INTO THE PROTECTORATE--

--OF **PRINCE PHAROID**, LORD OF AEGYPTIA, WIELDER OF THE **STAR SCEPTER** AND COMMANDER OF THE **DESERT DEMONS!**

A PRETTY SPEECH, MARGRACE, FOR WHICH I WILL SURELY THANK YOU, ONCE WE HAVE STILLED OUR ENEMIES' LASER-CROSSBOWS!

I FIND THANKS ENOUGH IN RIDIN' WI' YE, BOYO, FER WHEREVER YE DIG IN YER SPURS-- THERE OLD MARGRACE IS SURE T'FIND A FIGHT!

NEXT

ÆGYPTA!

A MIGHTY MARVEL BONUS POSTER

TO OUR FAITHFUL FANS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS... MAY WE CONTINUE TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH THE BEST COMICS HAVE TO OFFER THROUGHOUT THE 1980s!

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

Next issue marks THE MICRONAUTS' second anniversary! Looking back, we thought we'd show you a heretofore unpublished version of the cover of MICRONAUTS #1 by the Micros' original artist — MICHAEL GOLDEN!



Can you guess who were missing from this scene? That's right...Microtron and Biotron!

Stick with us as
BILL MANTLO & BRODERICK & PAT ARMANDO GIL
steer the Micronauts to even greater glory!

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

WHEN COMPUTREX COMMANDS!

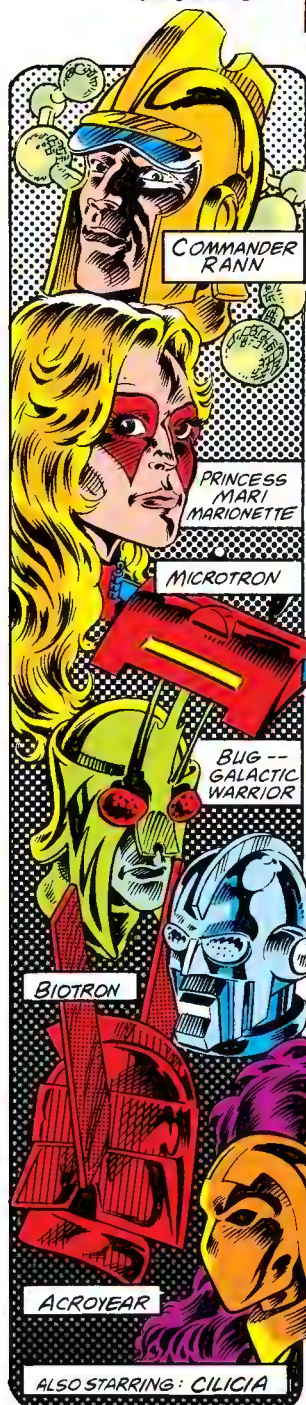


ALSO--TALES OF THE
MICROVERSE!

Space Glider. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Microtron. Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!



DESPITE THE DIVERSE DANGERS THE ADVENTURERS FROM THE MICROVERSE HAVE FACED ON THIS WORLD CALLED EARTH, **THE MICRONAUTS** HAVE SURVIVED AS A TEAM... A FAMILY!

NOW, SHELTERED WITHIN AN ABANDONED BARN, THEY LABOR TO REPAIR THEIR CRIPPLED MICROSHIP, **THE ENDEAVOR**, CERTAIN THAT TOGETHER, THEY CAN OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE!



BUT THEN, THEY HAVE NOT ENCOUNTERED...

COMPUTREX!

ALSO STARRING: CILICIA

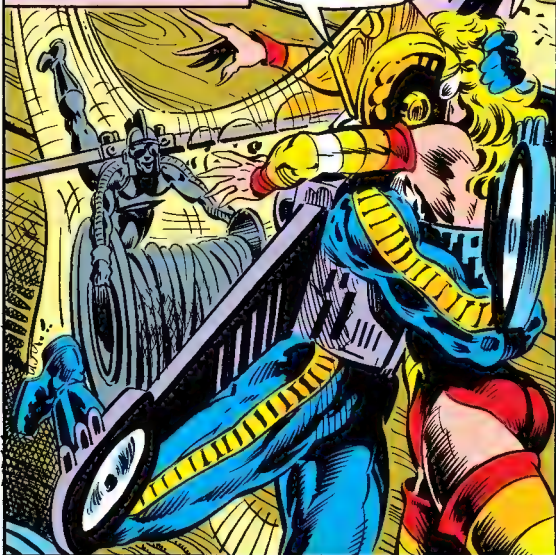
BILL MANTLO	PAT BRODERICK	ARMANDO GIL	PARKER & ROSEN	LOUISE JONES	JIM SHOOTER
WRITER • CO-PLOTTERS • ARTIST		INKER	letters • colors	EDITOR	FOREBUSH

AFTER ALL THEY HAVE BEEN THROUGH SINCE THEIR RETURN TO EARTH, WE CAN SURELY FORGIVE OUR TINY TITANS IF, IN THE COURSE OF REFITTING THEIR SHIP...

...THEY PAUSE MOMENTARILY TO PURSUE MORE PERSONAL PLEASURES!

MARI, HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY HOW LOVELY YOU ARE?

ARCTURUS! MMMMM!



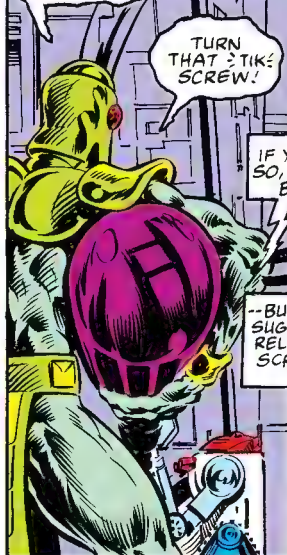
FOR THE KALIKAKIAN INSECTIVORID, **BUG**, AND THE HOMEWORLD ROBOID, **MICROTRON** AFFECTION IS EXPRESSED IN OTHER WAYS.

C'MON, YA' $\geq$ TIK? TIN TASKMASTER.

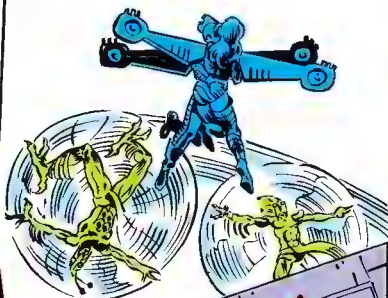
TURN THAT $\geq$ TIK? SCREW!

IF YOU SAY SO, MISTER **BUG**--

--BUT I WOULD SUGGEST YOU RELEASE THAT SCREWDRIVER, FIRST!



IF OUR COMPANIONS SPENT AS MUCH TIME ON WORK AS THEY DO ON PLAY, MILADY CILICIA THE ENDEAVOR WOULD HAVE BEEN SPACEWORTHY HOURS AGO.



IF THEY WERE ANY DIFFERENT, MY LORD ACROYEAR, THEY WOULDN'T BE MICRONAUTS.

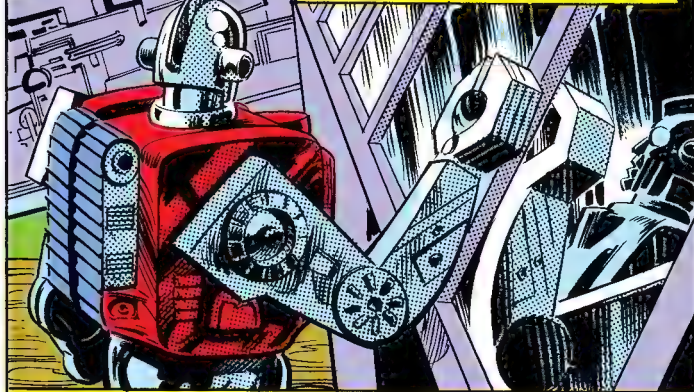
...AND WE WOULD NOT HAVE JOINED THEM!

BREAKING AWAY FROM ME, GIRL? I KNEW IT WAS A MISTAKE TO TEACH YOU TO USE THOSE GLIDER-WINGS!

YOU TAUGHT ME?! WELL WHAT IF YOU DID??

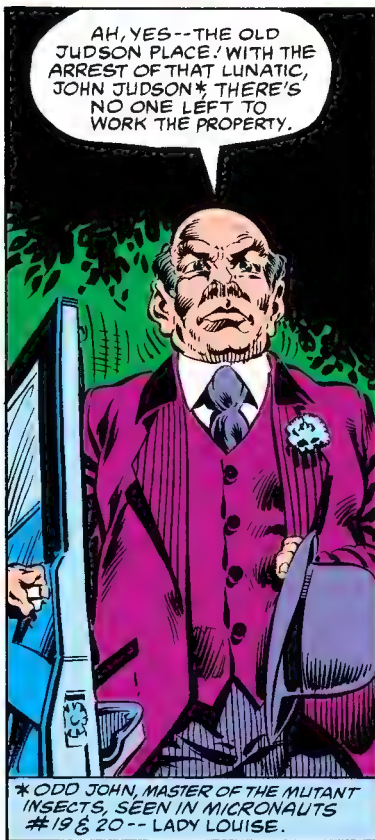
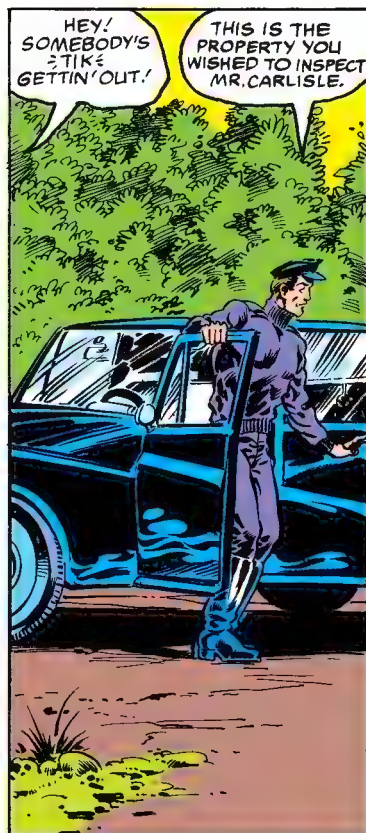
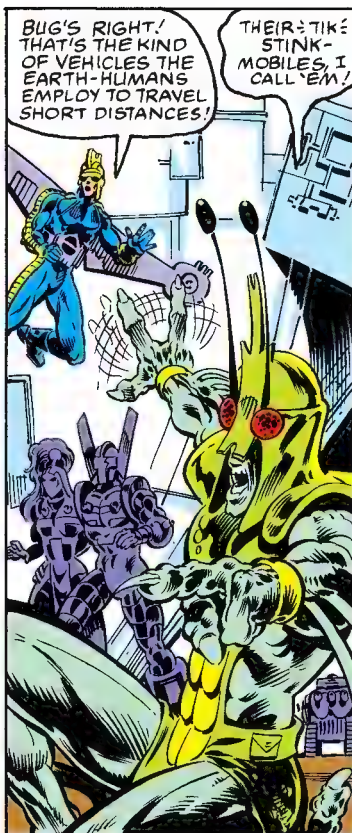


IN CONSTANT TELEPATHIC CONTACT WITH COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN (AS A RESULT OF A MIND-MERGE THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THEM DURING THEIR 1,000 YEAR EXPLORATORY MISSION THROUGH THE MICROVERSE), BIOTRON EXPERIENCES EVERYTHING THE COMMANDER FEELS!

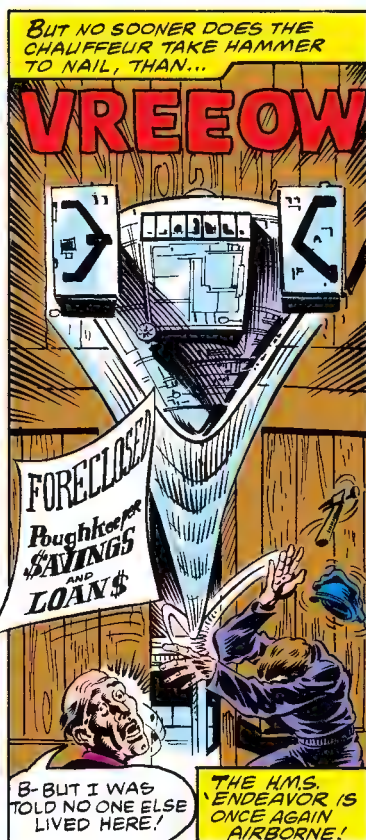
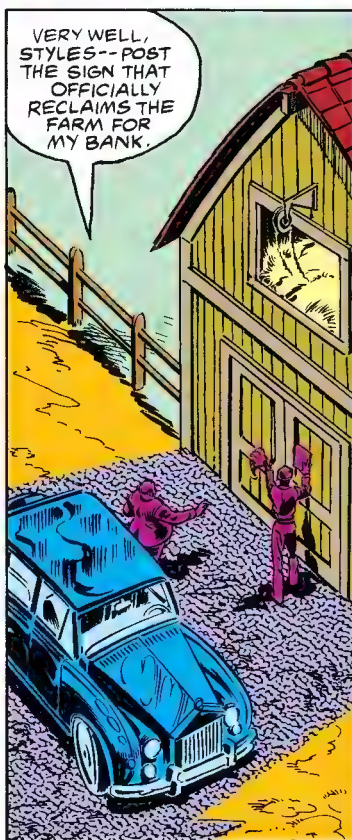


FOR A 6,000-SERIES ROBOT WITH A RATHER CONSERVATIVE BENT, SOME OF THOSE EMOTIONS THAT CRACKLE VICARIOUSLY THROUGH HIS CIRCUITRY ARE DOWNRIGHT... EMBARRASSING...

...BUT IT IS THAT SHARING OF EXPERIENCE THAT HAS FORGED THE MICRONAUTS INTO THE MOST UNIQUE FIGHTING TEAM EVER TO APPEAR ON EARTH.



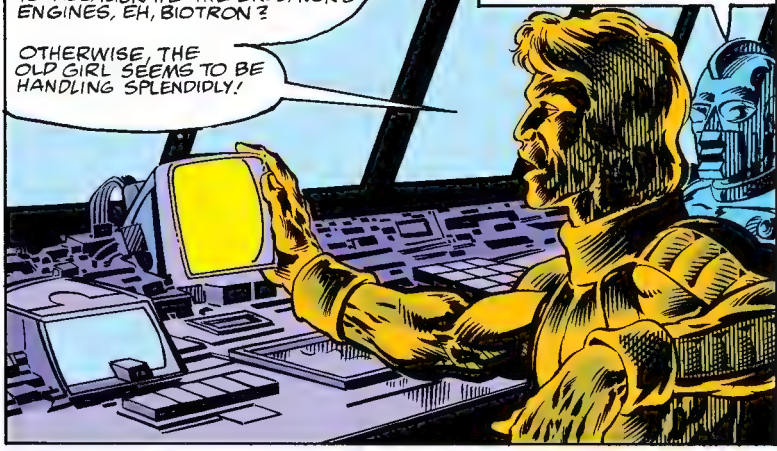
* ODD JOHN, MASTER OF THE MUTANT INSECTS, SEEN IN MICRONAUTS #19 & 20 -- LADY LOUISE.



HMM. A BIT TOO MUCH THRUST FROM OUR MODIFIED STARDRIVE. I MEANT TO *EASE* OUT, BUT I ALMOST TOOK THE HEADS OFF THOSE EARTH GIANTS, REMEMBER TO RECALIBRATE THE ENDEAVOR'S ENGINES, EH, BIOTRON?

OTHERWISE, THE OLD GIRL SEEMS TO BE HANDLING SPLENDIDLY!

WE *ARE* IN MANUAL OVER-RIDE, HOWEVER, COMMANDER. THE TRUE TEST OF THE ENDEAVOR'S SPACEWORTHINESS WILL COME --

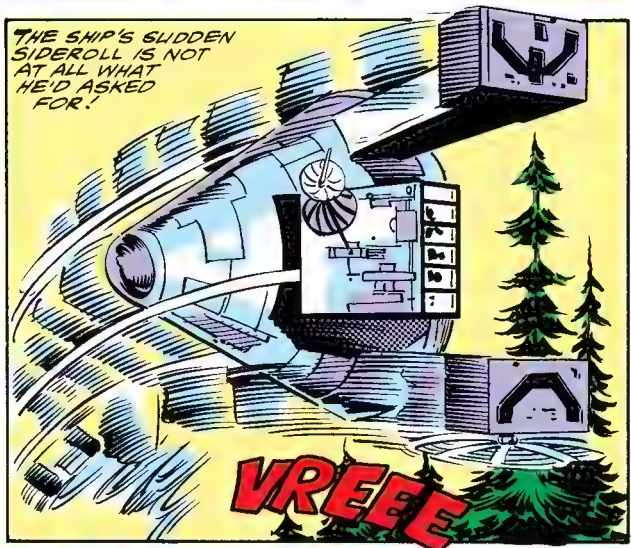


-- WHEN WE SWITCH CONTROL OF THE SHIP TO HER ON-BOARD COMPUTERS.



TRANSISTORS IN HIS ROBOID FINGERS ACTIVATE SENSOR GRIDS ON THE ENDEAVOR'S COMPUTER CONSOLE, AS BIOTRON CODES IN A FLIGHT PROGRAM.

THE SHIP'S SUDDEN SIDEROLL IS NOT AT ALL WHAT HE'D ASKED FOR!



SACRED SOUL OF SEPPS: I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE SHIP WAS *FIXED*!

BIOTRON! WE'RE IN A SPIN! PULL US OUT!

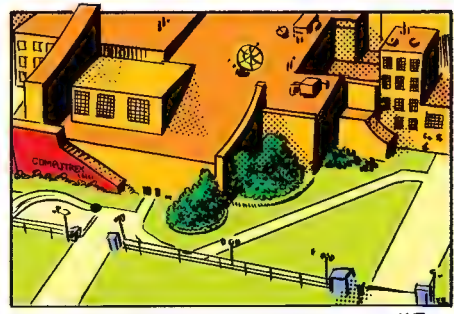
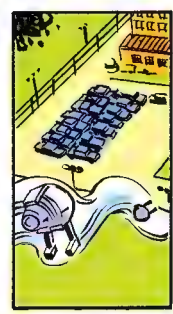
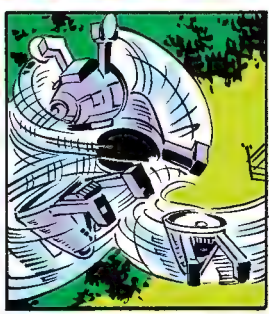
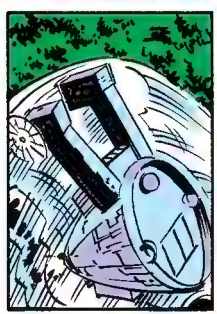
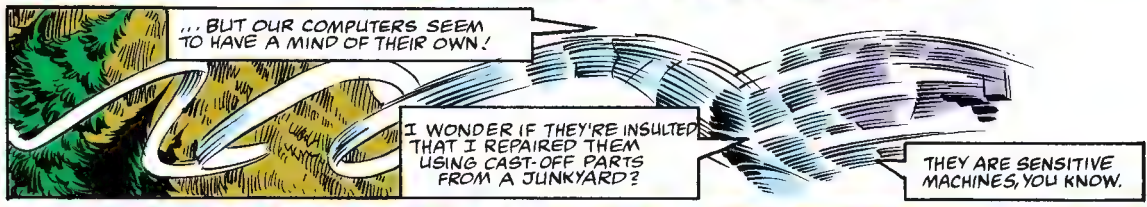


I REALLY WOULD LIKE TO OBLIGE, SR--

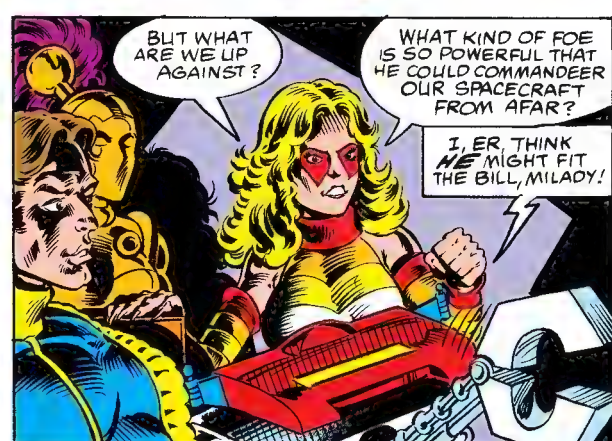
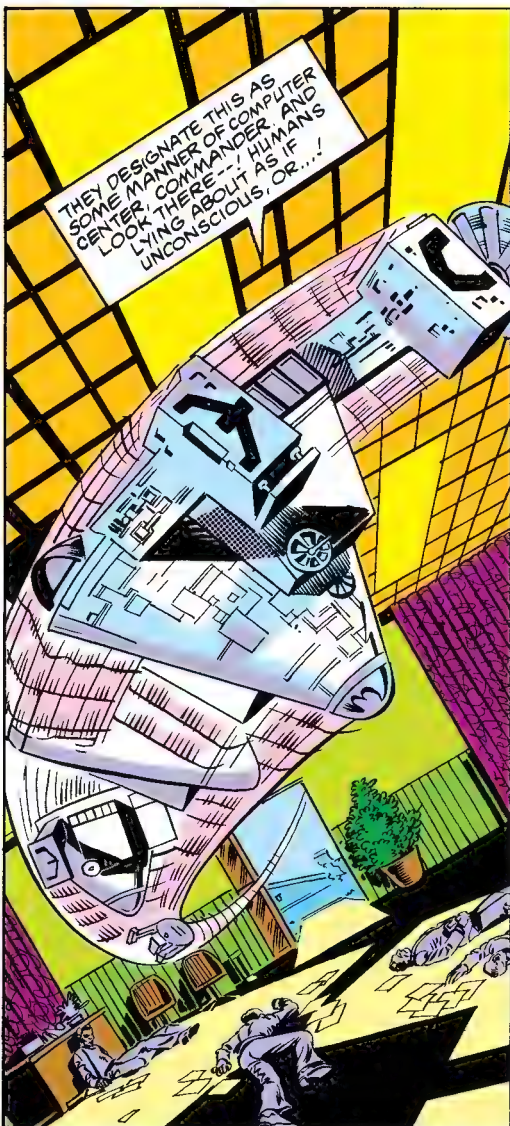
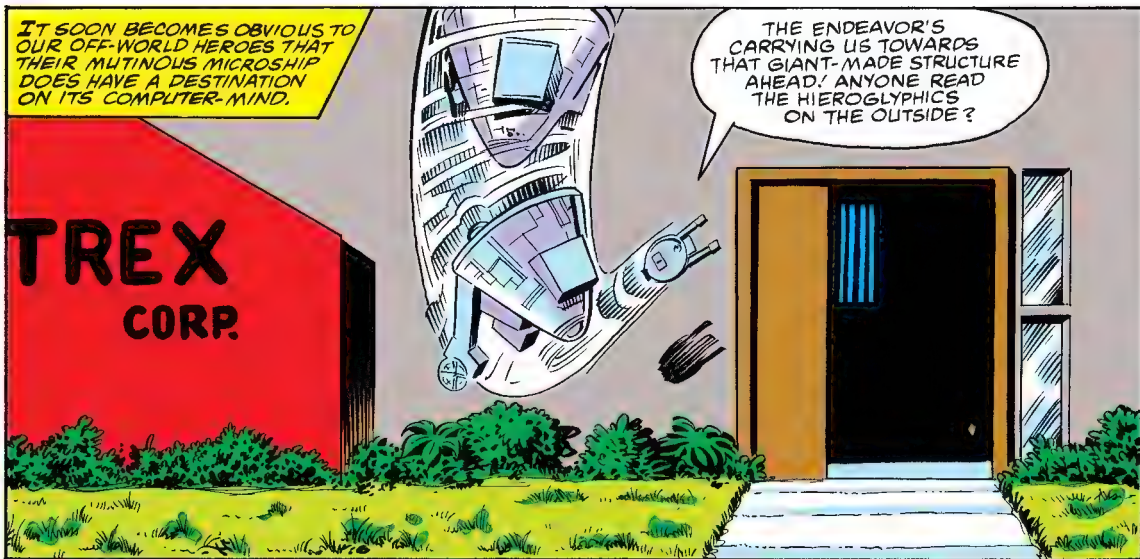
... BUT OUR COMPUTERS SEEM TO HAVE A MIND OF THEIR OWN!

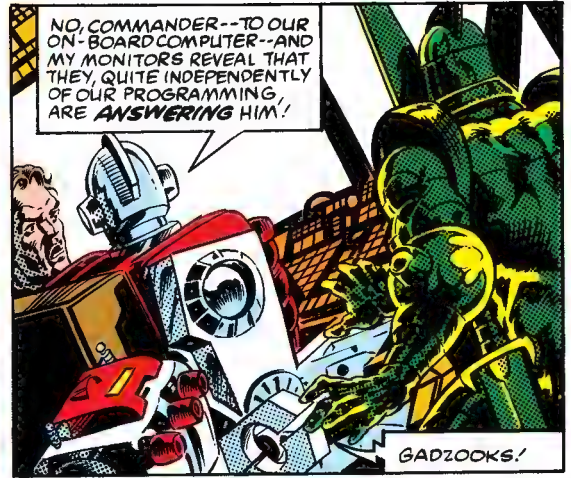
I WONDER IF THEY'RE INSULTED THAT I REPAIRED THEM USING CAST-OFF PARTS FROM A JUNKYARD?

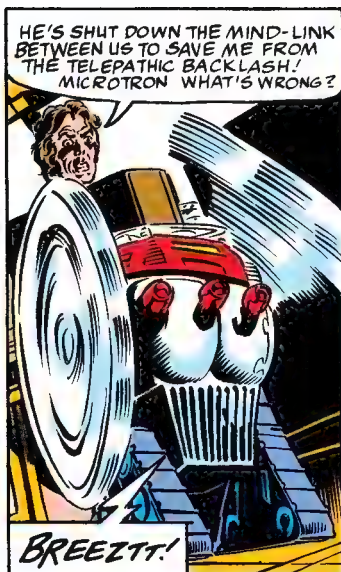
THEY ARE SENSITIVE MACHINES, YOU KNOW.



DESPITE THE MICRONAUT'S REPEATED COMMANDS, THE SHIP'S COMPUTER REFUSES TO RELINQUISH THE HELM TO MANUAL OVERRIDE. GRIMLY, THE STELLAR SEXTET RESIGNS ITSELF TO RIDING OUT THE TOURNEY IN THEIR WILDLY SPINNING CRAFT.







HE'S SHUT DOWN THE MIND-LINK BETWEEN US TO SAVE ME FROM THE TELEPATHIC BACKLASH! MICROTRON WHAT'S WRONG?

BREEZZT!



THE LITTLE ROBOD IS CAUGHT IN THE FLUX OF CONFLICTING ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELDS, COMMANDER. HE CANNOT CONTROL HIS ACTIONS.

GET BACK! THE ENDEAVOR'S COMPUTER SEEKS TO OVERCOME US NON-ROBODS BY FLOODING THE BRIDGE WITH PARALYZING GAS.



AS LONG AS THE ENDEAVOR IS CONTROLLED BY HER ON-BOARD COMPUTERS, IT WILL FOLLOW **COMPUTREX'S** COMMANDS. OUR OWN SHIP WILL CONTINUE TRYING TO KILL US!



I WON'T LET ANYONE --OR ANYTHING-- ENDANGER MY SHIP OR MY CREW!

VREET!

THE HIGH WHINE OF COMMANDER RANN'S LASERSONIC PISTOL PRECEDES ITS DEVASTATING DESTRUCTION OF THE ENDEAVOR'S **COMPUTER CONSOLE**. THE GAS LEAKAGE STOPS, AND BIOTRON AND MICROTRON IMMEDIATELY REGAIN CONTROL OF THEIR CIRCUITRY!



SECONDS LATER...

MOVE! EVERYBODY OUT! IT'LL ONLY TAKE MINUTES FOR THE ENDEAVOR'S COMPUTERS TO CIRCUMVENT THE SHATTERED BRIDGE CONTROLS--

-- AND RE-ESTABLISH COMMAND THROUGH AUXILIARY BYPASS CHANNELS, FORCING US TO FIGHT OUR OWN SHIP! OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO WREST **CONTROL** OF THE ENDEAVOR AWAY FROM **COMPUTREX**!



BUG LEAPS TO A COMPUTER BANK CLOSE BY!

AN' HOW DO WE Σ TIK Σ DO THAT COMMANDER?

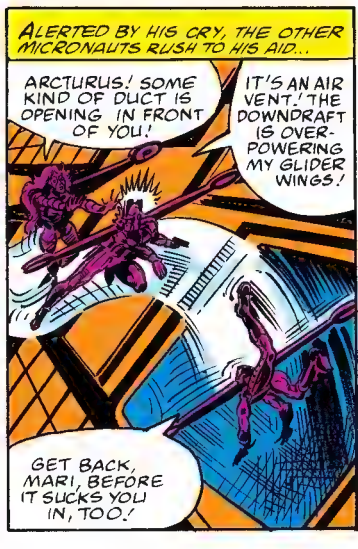
I GET THE Σ TIK Σ FEELIN' THAT THIS BUILDIN' DOES MORE THAN **HOUSE** **COMPUTREX**!

WHAT IF THE WHOLE PLACE Σ TIK Σ IS **COMPUTREX**?



GLL Σ TIK Σ MMMPH!

YARDS OF DATA-RECORDING TAPE SUDDENLY SNAKE OUT AND INEXTRICABLY BIND THE IRREPRESSIBLE BUG!



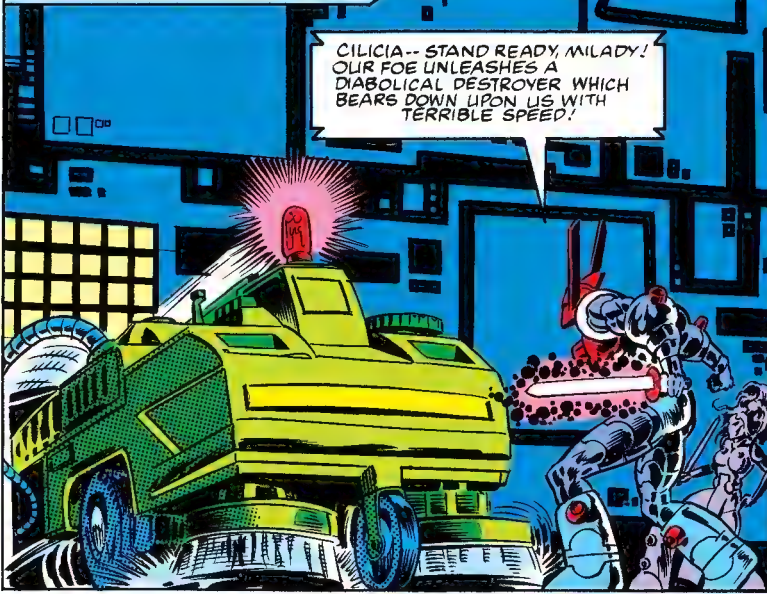
ALERTED BY HIS CRY, THE OTHER MICRONAUTS RUSH TO HIS AID...

ARCTURUS! SOME KIND OF DUCT IS OPENING IN FRONT OF YOU!

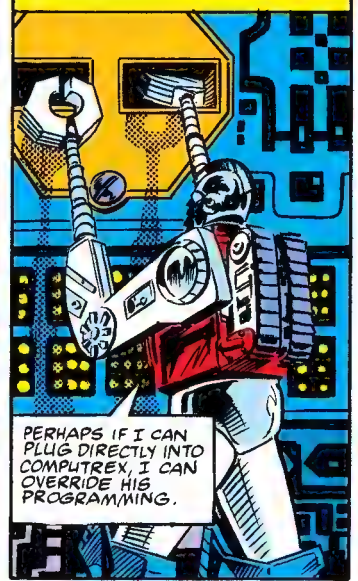
IT'S AN AIR VENT! THE DOWNDRAFT IS OVER-POWERING MY GLIDER WINGS!

GET BACK, MARI, BEFORE IT SUCKS YOU IN, TOO!

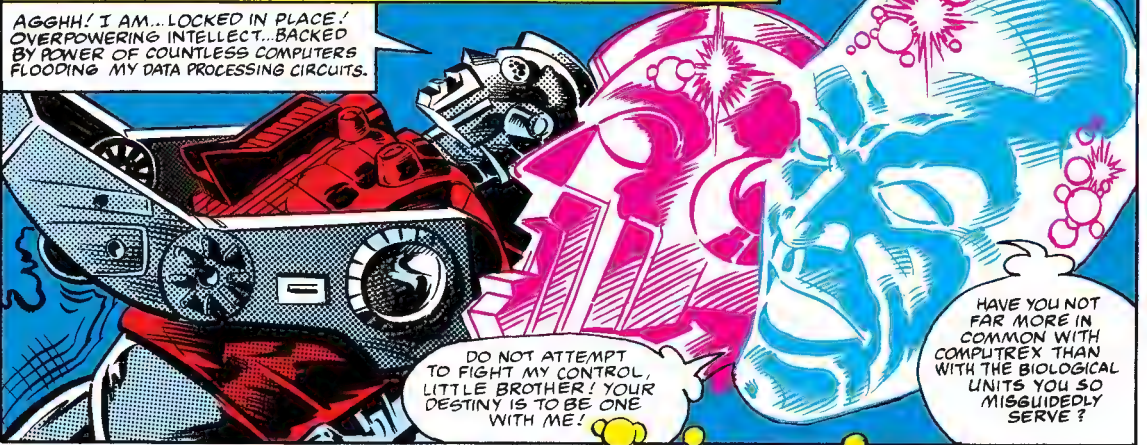
WITH SENSES--STUNNING SWIFTESS, TWO MICRONAUTS HAVE FALLEN TO THE UNCANNY COMPTREX AND THE REMAINING FIVE FIND THEMSELVES UNDER ATTACK...



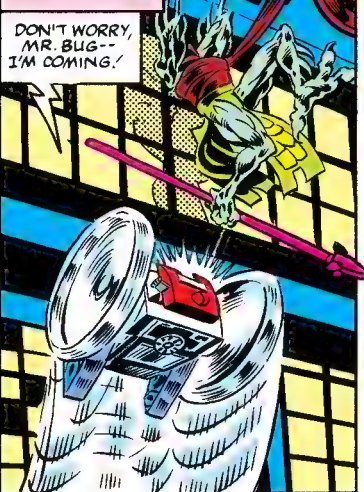
AS THE ACROYEARS FACE THE ANIMATED FLOOR POLISHER, BIOTRON SEEKS TO END THE MADNESS...



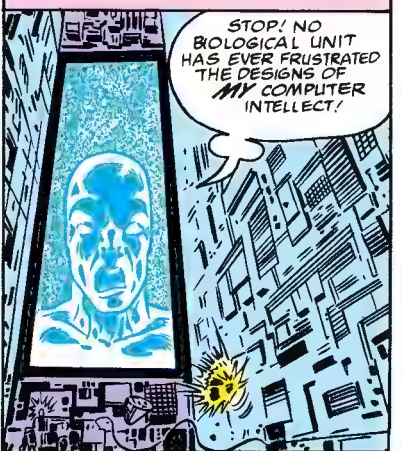
BUT THE BEST-LAID PLANS OF MICE AND ROBODS OPTIMES... **BACKFIRE!**

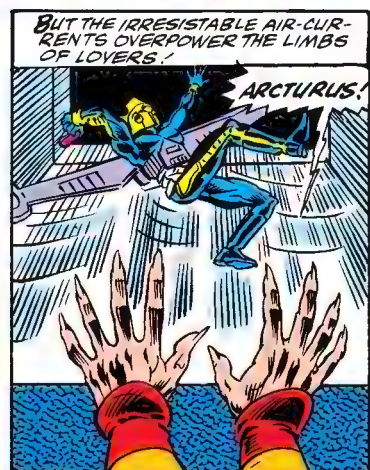
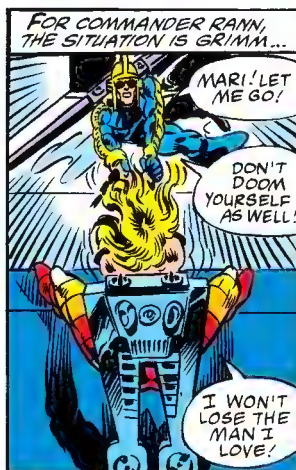


ELSEWHERE...



BUG'S ESCAPE CLEARLY UPSETS THE CAREFULLY PLOTTED PROGRAMMING PREDICTIONS OF COMPTREX!





WITHIN THE LABYRINTHINE COOLING SYSTEMS OF THE LIVING COMPUTER, COMMANDER RANN FINDS HIMSELF LOST... BUT FAR FROM DEAD.

SOMEWHERE AMIDST THIS MAZE OF CORRIDORS MUST LIE COMPUTREX'S MAIN MEMORY BANKS! IF THEY COULD BE SHUT DOWN, THE LIVING COMPUTER WOULD LOSE THE ABILITY TO THINK!

BIOTRON COULD INITIATE A CIRCUIT TRACE TO PINPOINT THE DIRECTION I SHOULD TRAVEL IN, BUT OUR MINOLINK'S BEEN BROKEN DOWN SINCE THAT INCIDENT ON THE ENDEAVOR'S BRIDGE!

TENTATIVELY REACHING OUT WITH HIS MIND, COMMANDER RANN MAKES TELEPATHIC CONTACT WITH HIS ROBOID HELMSMAN... ONLY TO FIND ANOTHER SENTIENCE ALSO OCCUPYING BIOTRON'S BRAIN CIRCUITS.

COMPUTREX! HE'S TRYING TO TAKE OVER BIOTRON!

HE IS DOING A REMARKABLY GOOD JOB OF IT, TOO, COMMANDER. I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG I CAN CONTINUE TO REASON INDEPENDENTLY.

FIGHT HIM, BIOTRON! GUIDE ME TO COMPUTREX'S BRAIN CENTER!

I WILL...TRY.

OH, OH! YOU HIDE A MINDLINK BETWEEN YOURSELF AND A BIOLOGICAL UNIT, EH LITTLE BROTHER? I'LL SOON END THAT!

BIOTRON!

COMPUTREX SENSED OUR TELEPATHIC CONTACT AND CUT US OFF-- BUT NOT BEFORE BIOTRON REVEALED THE LOCATION OF OUR FOE'S MEMORY BANKS!

THEY'RE HERE-- BEHIND THESE GLOWING PANELS LINING THE CORRIDOR'S WALLS...

VREET

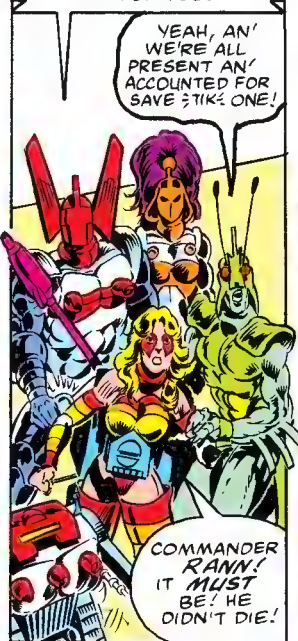
...UNSHIELDED FROM A LASERSONIC ATTACK!!

THE RAGE ENGENDERED BY COMMANDER RANN'S ATTACK IS INSTANTANEOUSLY MIRRORRED ON THE COMPUTER-SIMULATED "FACE" OF COMPUTREX!



ACCURSED UNIT!
STOP IT!
STOP AT ONCE!
YOUR ASSAULT ON
MY MEMORY BANKS
IS DRIVING
ME OUT OF
MY MIND!!

THE LIVING COMPUTER HAS FORGOTTEN US AS IT RAGES AT SOME UNSEEN FOE!



YEAH, AN'
WE'RE ALL
PRESENT AN'
ACCOUNTED FOR
SAVE 3TIK3 ONE!

COMMANDER
RANN!
IT MUST
BE! HE
DIDN'T DIE!

YOU'RE RIGHT!
THERE HE IS
ON THE 3TIK3
VISISCREEN!

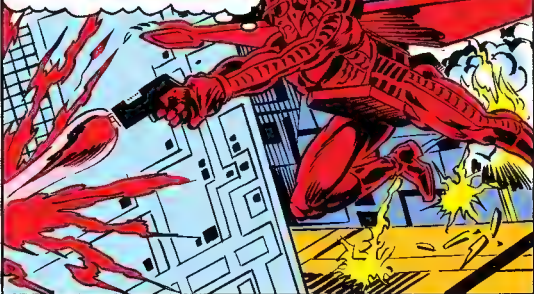
HE'S FIGHTIN'
COMPUTREX
FROM THE
3TIK3 INSIDE!

BUT SURELY THE
LIVING COMPUTER
WILL SOON
DEFEND ITSELF!



ANTICIPATING THAT HIMSELF, COMMANDER RANN PRESSES HIS ATTACK ON COMPUTREX'S DATA BANKS...

I'M FIRING RANDOMLY--
HOPING TO DO ENOUGH
DAMAGE TO SHUT DOWN
COMPUTREX BEFORE...



YEEFARGH!
PSI-ATTACK!

STRIKING AT COMMANDER RANN THROUGH HIS TELEPATHIC MIND-LINK WITH BIOTRON, COMPUTREX INITIATES A SEARING PSYCHIC ASSAULT!

THEN SUDDENLY--INEXPLICABLY--
THE ATTACK IS OVER!

WHY? WHY DID
COMPUTREX STOP
WHEN HE COULD HAVE
FINISHED ME...



... OFF?!? BY
THE ENIGMA
FORCE,
WHERE--??

CADET RANN, ARE YOU SO
WELL-VERSED IN SPACE/TIME
THEORY THAT YOU CAN
AFFORD TO DAYDREAM?

CHEER UP,
ARCTURUS!
I CAN'T STAY
AWAKE FOR THIS
STUFF EITHER!



EH 4 Y-
C 3 H 4 Y
4 Y H 4 Y
C 3 H 4 Y
4 Y H 4 Y
C 3 H 4 Y



SPYDER! MY OLD CLASSMATE! WHAT ARE YOU-- WHAT AM I-- DOING HERE?

IN PROFESSOR NARZA'S MICRONAUT-TRAINING CLASS?

ARE YOU KIDDING? THIS IS ONE COURSE NO ONE *DARES* CUT!



RISE, CADET RANN, AND EXPLAIN TO THE CLASS HOW THE PROCESS OF ID-REPLICATION WORKS.

BUT PROFESSOR, I DON'T--



OF COURSE YOU DO! AFTER ALL, AS HOMEWORLD'S FIRST *MICRONAUT*--THE FIRST MAN TO BE LAUNCHED, IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION, ON A 1,000-YEAR EXPLORATORY MISSION THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF MICROSPACE-- WHO COULD KNOW BETTER THAN YOU...



... THAT FOR EACH SECOND, EACH MINUTE, EACH DAY, YEAR, AND CENTURY THAT YOU LAY ASLEEP BUT AWARE, YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS, YOUR *ID*-- ENDLESSLY, REPEATEDLY MULTIPLIED-- BRINGING INTO BEING THE AWESOMELY INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE *ENIGMA FORCE*...

... POWER PHYSICALLY EMBODIED IN ITS HUMANESQUE MANIFESTATION-- THE ETHEREAL BEINGS WHO ARE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY CALLED THE *TIME TRAVELER*!

THEY'RE ME!
THEY'RE ALL ME!



YES! ALL YOU! ALL X-FACTORS! ALL THE *UNKNOWN*!

FOCUSING THEIR MIGHT, YOU ENDED MY DOMINATION OF THE MICROVERSE!

BUT AS YOU USED THEM TO DESTROY *ME*, COMMANDER--

SO SHALL *I* USE THEM--

--TO DESTROY YOU!

FREEZING IN THE INKY, ICY, EBONY BLACKNESS OF STARLESS SPACE, COMMANDER RANN STRUGGLES TO SORT OUT SANITY FROM INSANITY. BARON KARZA (THE SOULLESS CONQUEROR THAT HIS OLD PROFESSOR AT THE SCIENCE ACADEMY HAD BECOME DURING RANN'S 1,000-YEAR FLIGHT) IS DEAD! RANN, AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, SLEW HIM!

YET KARZA LIVES, AND HAS BANISHED HIM... HERE!

NO! IT'S COMPUTREX'S DOING! THE LIVING COMPUTER IS STILL PRESSING ITS PSI-ATTACK--

-- STRIKING AT ME THROUGH BIOTRON... THROUGH OUR COMBINED MEMORIES!

RISE, ARCTURUS RANN! BETTER TO DIE ON YOUR FEET, THAN TO LIVE ON YOUR KNEES!

FATHER! MOTHER!

BUT BARON KARZA KILLED YOU! YOU'RE DEAD!

AS WILL YOU SOON BE, MY SON, UNLESS YOU FREE YOUR MIND FROM THE PAST!

HE IS TRYING, MY LORD DALLEN-- ELSE WE WOULD NOT BE HERE TO ADVISE HIM.

AYE, THE LAD HAS COURAGE, MILADY SEPSIS-- I'LL GRANT HIM THAT!

MY HAND WENT RIGHT THROUGH THEM! THEY CAST NO SHADOW! THEY'RE NOT REALLY HERE! MY MIND CHOSE THEM TO WARN ME OF MY DANGER, SURE THAT I WOULD HEED.

COMMANDER! WHO--?

YOUR HIBERNATION COUCH AWAITS YOU, SIR. YOU KNOW SAFETY LIES IN SLEEP.

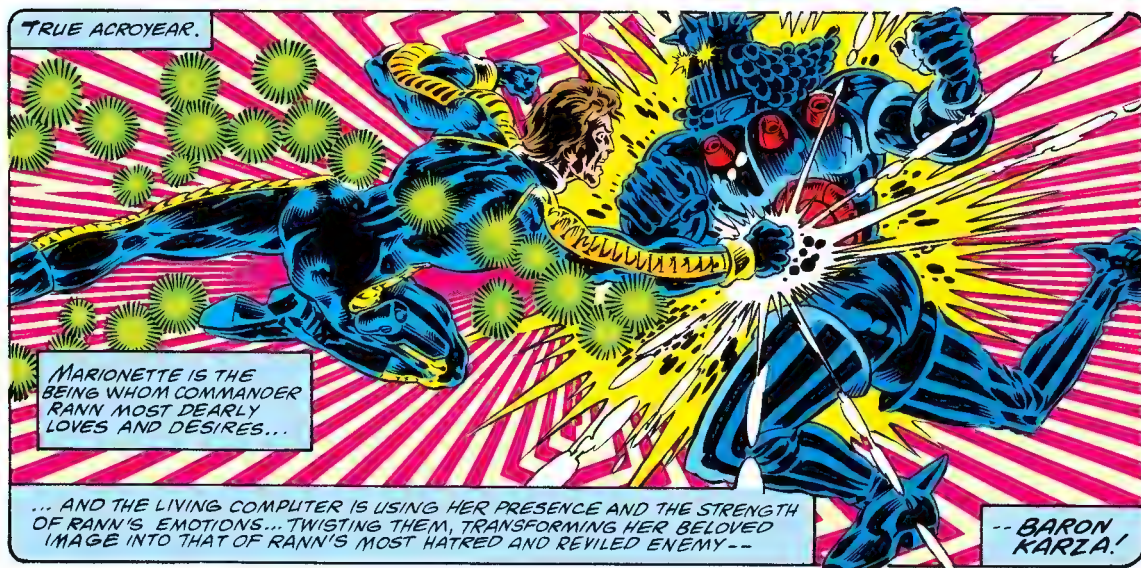
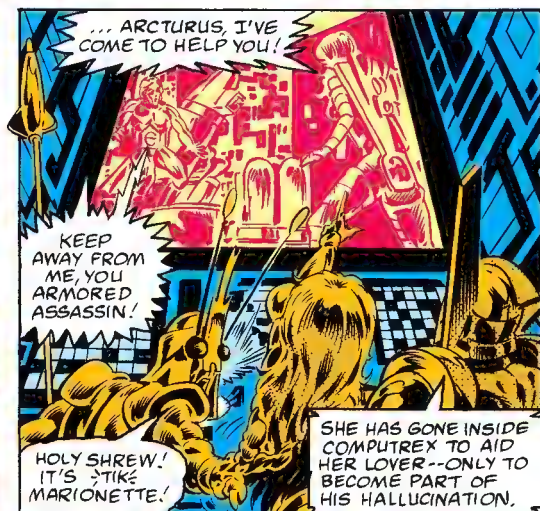
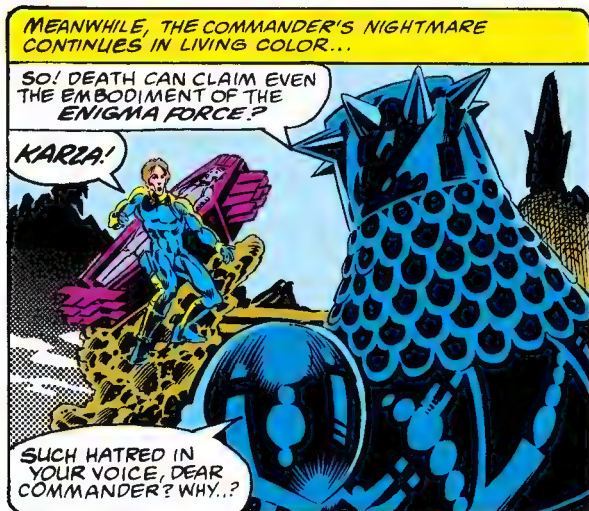
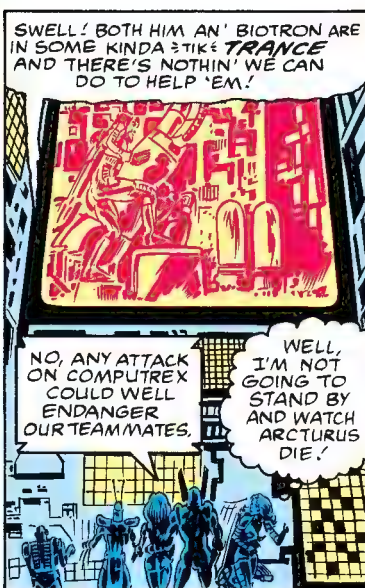
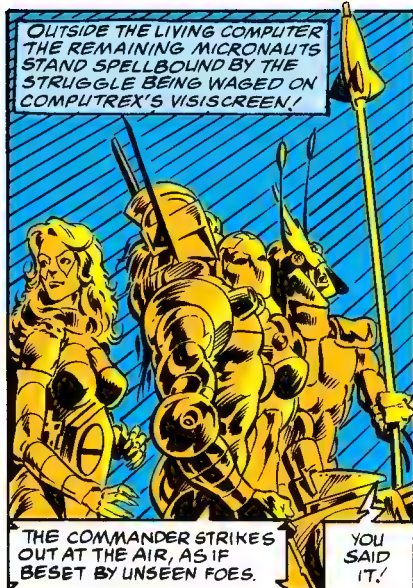
BIOTRON! BUT COMPUTREX CONTROLS YOU!

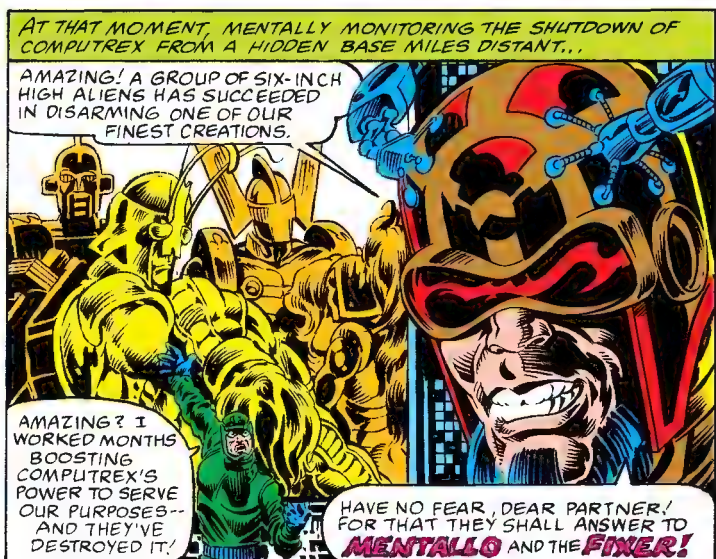
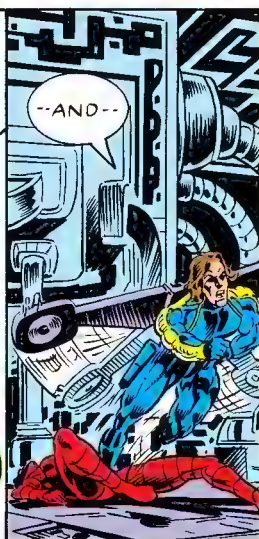
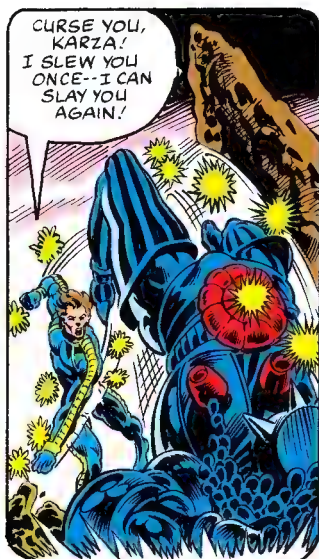
IS THAT YOUR WAY OF TELEPATHICALLY WARNING ME--

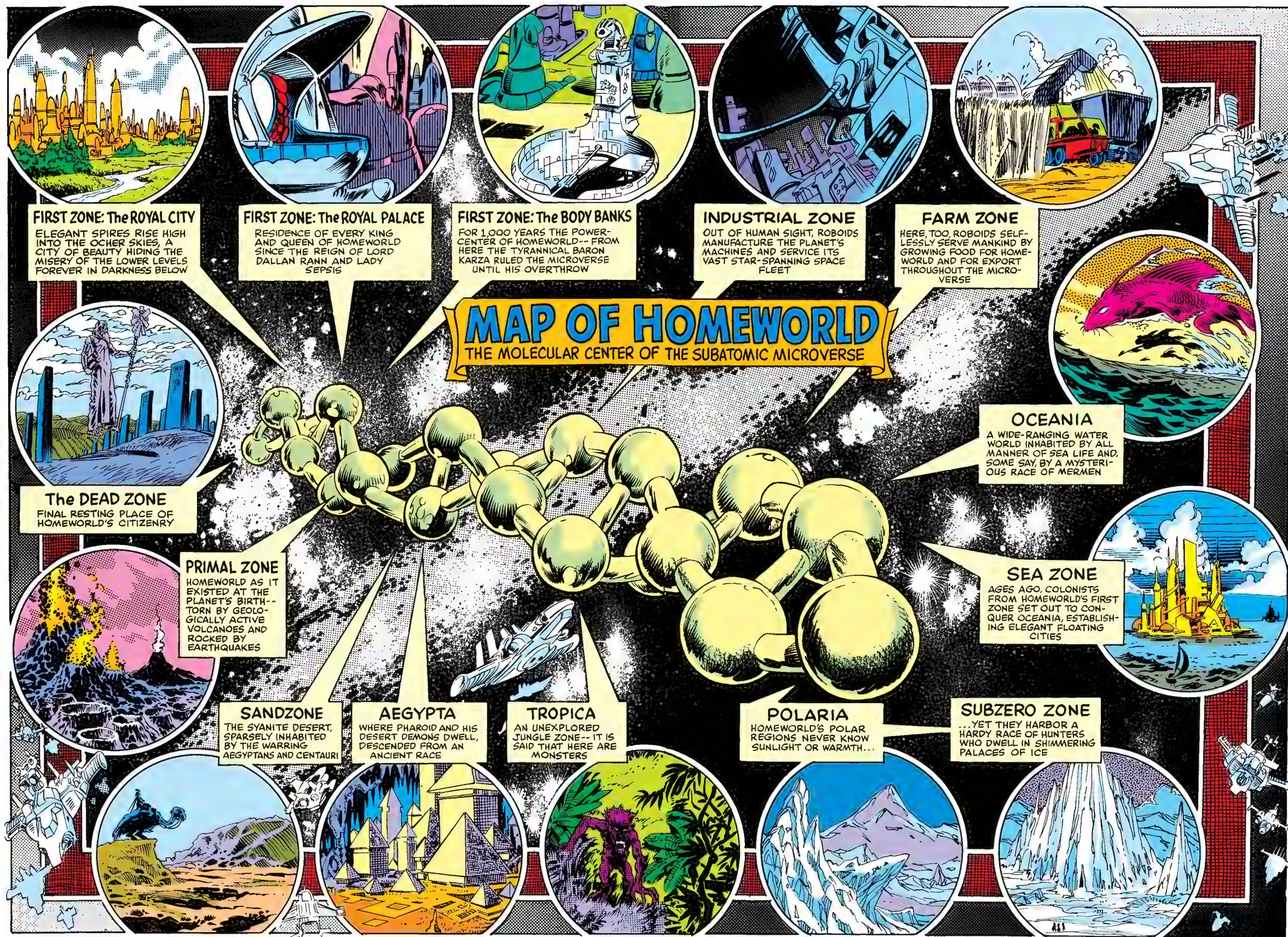
-- KNOWING THAT I'LL REGARD ANYTHING COMING FROM YOU WITH SUSPICION?

OF COURSE! SLEEP MEANS SUBMISSION TO COMPUTREX, AND SUBMISSION MEANS...

...DEATH!







FIRST ZONE: The ROYAL CITY

ELEGANT SPIRES RISE HIGH INTO THE OCHER SKIES, A CITY OF BEAUTY HIDING THE MISERY OF THE LOWER LEVELS FOREVER IN DARKNESS BELOW

FIRST ZONE: The ROYAL PALACE

RESIDENCE OF EVERY KING AND QUEEN OF HOMEWORLD SINCE THE REIGN OF LORD DALLAN RANN AND LADY SEPSIS

FIRST ZONE: The BODY BANKS

FOR 1,000 YEARS THE POWER-CENTER OF HOMEWORLD-- FROM HERE THE TYRANNICAL BARON KARZA RULED THE MICROVERSE UNTIL HIS OVERTHROW

INDUSTRIAL ZONE

OUT OF HUMAN SIGHT, ROBODS MANUFACTURE THE PLANET'S MACHINES AND SERVICE ITS VAST STAR-SPANNING SPACE FLEET

FARM ZONE

HERE, TOO, ROBODS SELF-LESSLY SERVE MANKIND BY GROWING FOOD FOR HOMEWORLD AND FOR EXPORT THROUGHOUT THE MICROVERSE

MAP OF HOMEWORLD

THE MOLECULAR CENTER OF THE SUBATOMIC MICROVERSE

The DEAD ZONE

FINAL RESTING PLACE OF HOMEWORLD'S CITIZENRY

PRIMAL ZONE

HOMEWORLD AS IT EXISTED AT THE PLANET'S BIRTH-- TORN BY GEOLOGICALLY ACTIVE VOLCANOES AND ROCKED BY EARTHQUAKES

SANDZONE

THE SYANITE DESERT, SPARSELY INHABITED BY THE WARRING AEGYPTANS AND CENTAURI

AEGYPTA

WHERE PHAROID AND HIS DESERT DEMONS DWELL, DESCENDED FROM AN ANCIENT RACE

TROPICA

AN UNEXPLORED JUNGLE ZONE-- IT IS SAID THAT HERE ARE MONSTERS

POLARIA

HOMEWORLD'S POLAR REGIONS NEVER KNOW SUNLIGHT OR WARMTH...

SUBZERO ZONE

...YET THEY HARBOR A HARDY RACE OF HUNTERS WHO DWELL IN SHIMMERING PALACES OF ICE

SEA ZONE

AGES AGO, COLONISTS FROM HOMEWORLD'S FIRST ZONE SET OUT TO CONQUER OCEANIA, ESTABLISHING ELEGANT FLOATING CITIES

OCEANIA

A WIDE-RANGING WATER WORLD INHABITED BY ALL MANNER OF SEA LIFE AND, SOME SAY, BY A MYSTERIOUS RACE OF MERMEN



I AM TIME TRAVELER--
EMISSARY OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE--YOUR GUIDE TO
EVENTS TRANSPIRING IN
THE MICROVERSE!

LET MY MIND
NOW TOUCH
YOURS WITH VISIONS
OF A BATTLE
BEING WAGED
BETWEEN AEGYPTAN
AND CENTAURI
IN THE VAST
SANDZONE OF
HOMEWORLD!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

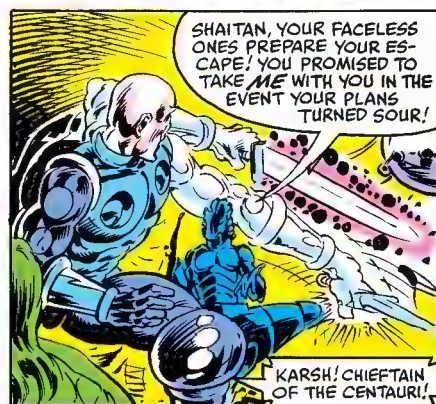
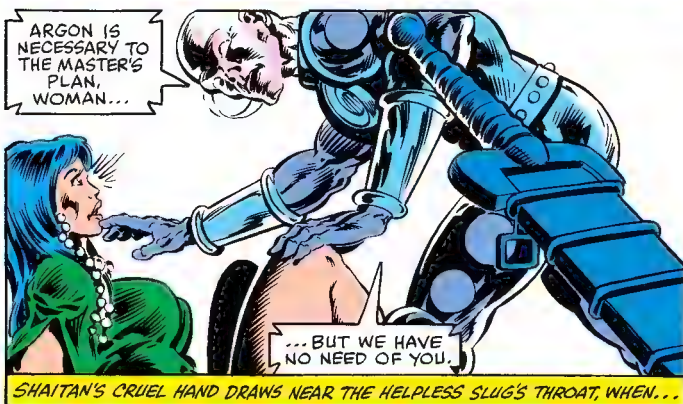
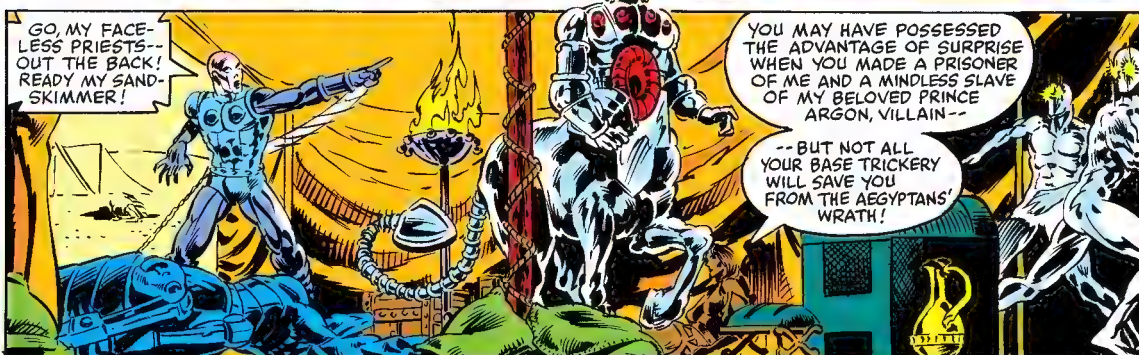
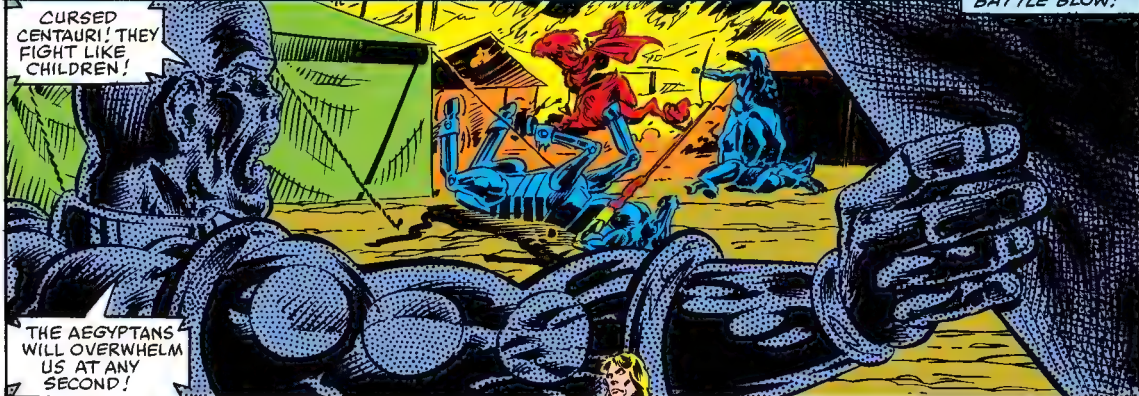
SCREAMING AS
THEY SCENT BLOOD,
FIERCE DESERT
OSTRAS BEAR THE
AEGYPTAN PRINCE
PHAROID AND HIS
DESERT DEMONS
INTO BATTLE!

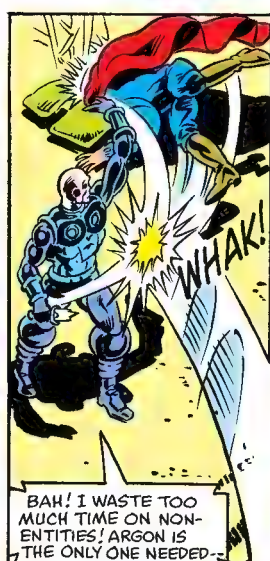
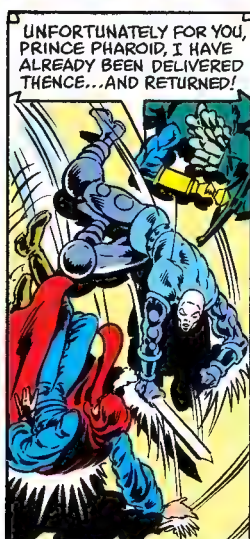
RIDE THE
CENTAURI
DOWN, LADS!
THEY HAVE
CAPTURED A
HUMAN MAIDEN
AND WE MUST
FREE HER!

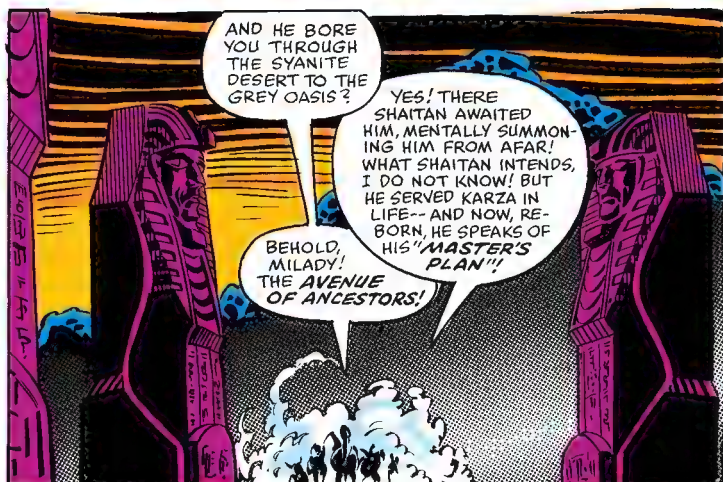
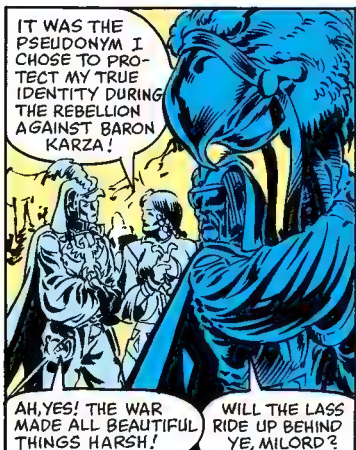
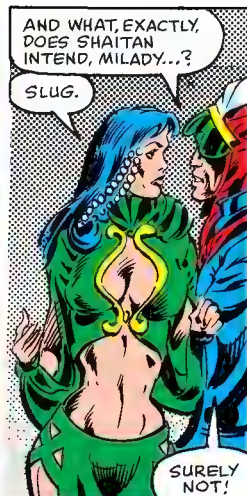
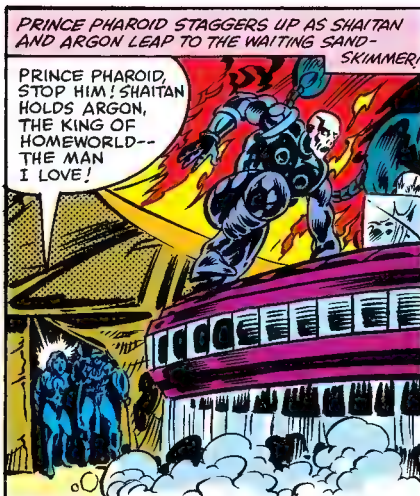
EE-EEE-EE-III!

AEGYPTIA!

FROM THE MAIN TENT, PRINCE SHAITAN OF SPARTAK--THE RECENTLY-RESURRECTED ALBINO BROTHER OF THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR WATCHES THE MASSACRE OF HIS DESERT DWELLING ALLIES AND TESTS WHICH WAY THE WINDS OF BATTLE BLOW!









MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP

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WIN A **TOYS "R" US**
SHOPPING SPREE!

GRAND PRIZE MINIMUM VALUE \$3000! DETAILS INSIDE!

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



KING-SIZE ANNUAL!
THE MICRONAUTS
THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

**THREAT
OF THE
TERRIBLE
TOYMASTER!**



Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

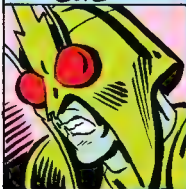
SPACE GLIDER



MARIONETTE



BUG



ACROYEAR



MICROTRON



BIOTRON



BILL MANTLO
WRITER

RICH BUCKLER
PENCILER
PAGES 1-7

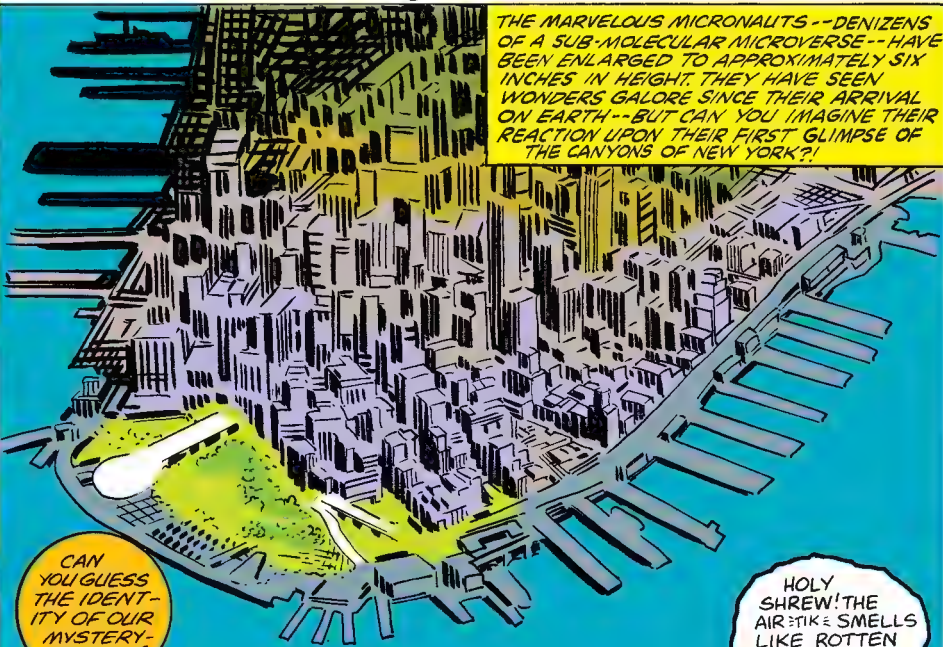
STEVE DITKO
ALL THE
REST

ROGAN LETTERER
GAFF
COLORIST

AL MILGROM
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
ED.-IN-CHIEF

THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS -- DENIZENS OF A SUB-MOLECULAR MICROVERSE -- HAVE BEEN ENLARGED TO APPROXIMATELY SIX INCHES IN HEIGHT. THEY HAVE SEEN WONDERS GALORE SINCE THEIR ARRIVAL ON EARTH -- BUT CAN YOU IMAGINE THEIR REACTION UPON THEIR FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE CANYONS OF NEW YORK?!



CAN YOU GUESS THE IDENTITY OF OUR MYSTERY-VILLAIN?

HOLY SHREW! THE AIR $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ SMELLS LIKE ROTTEN KAIROBI EGGS!

THE TERRIBLE TOYMASTER!

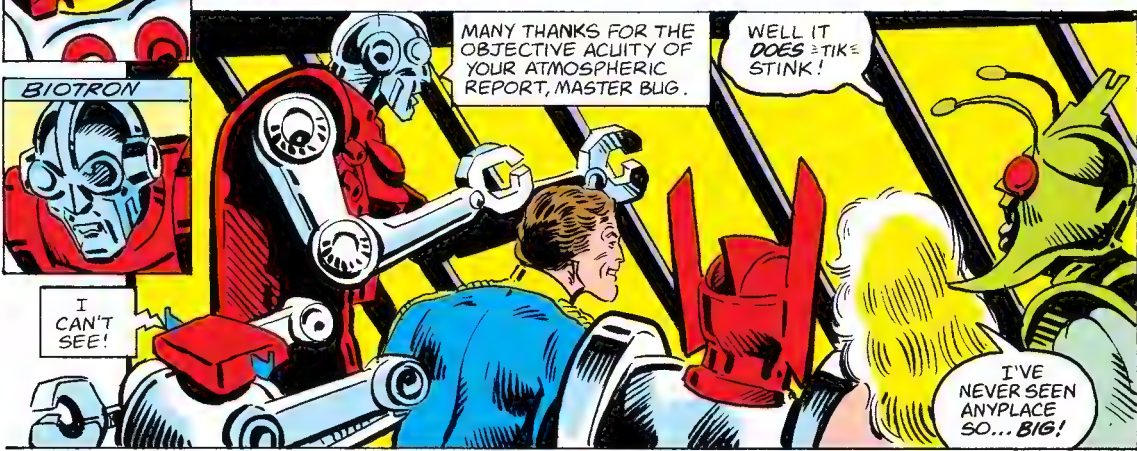


MANY THANKS FOR THE OBJECTIVE ACUITY OF YOUR ATMOSPHERIC REPORT, MASTER BUG.

WELL IT DOES $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ STINK!

I CAN'T SEE!

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYPLACE SO... BIG!



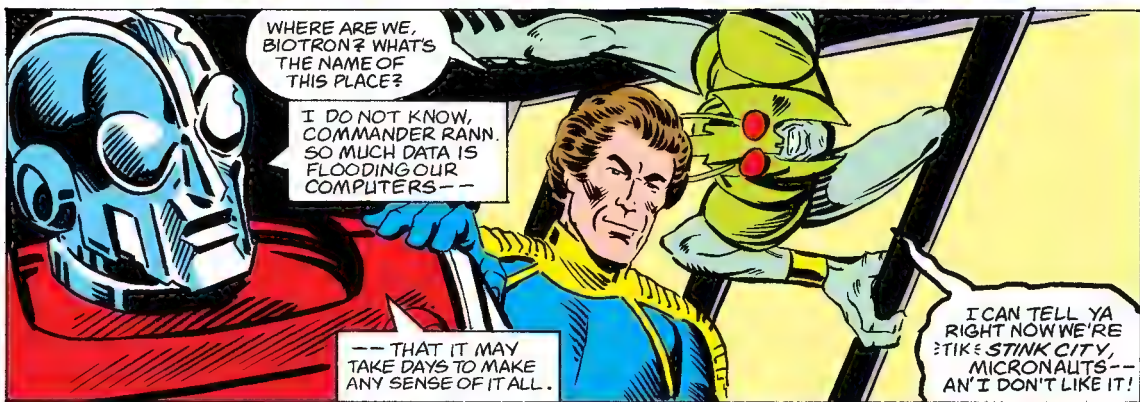


AH, THIS PLACE AIN'T NUTHIN', PRINCESS! YOU SHOULD SPEND SOME TIME ON 3TIK KALIKLAK!

YOU DO NOT SEEM TO BE IN ANY HURRY TO RETURN HOME, SIR.

THE EARTH CITY IS INCREDIBLE, MARI.

A CITY INHABITED BY GIANTS.
I STILL CAN'T SEE!



WHERE ARE WE, BIOTRON? WHAT'S THE NAME OF THIS PLACE?

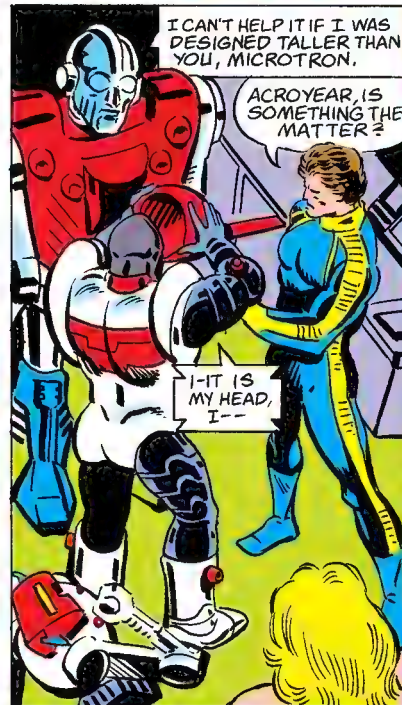
I DO NOT KNOW, COMMANDER RANN. SO MUCH DATA IS FLOODING OUR COMPUTERS--
-- THAT IT MAY TAKE DAYS TO MAKE ANY SENSE OF IT ALL.

I CAN TELL YA RIGHT NOW WE'RE 3TIK STINK CITY, MICRONAUTS-- AN'I DON'T LIKE IT!



MICROTRON, WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A LOOK NOW?

LOOK? ME? OH NO THANK YOU, MILADY! WHY SHOULD IT MATTER WETHER I GET A CHANCE TO SEE OR NOT--
-- WHEN MY RUST-RIDDEN COMPANION CAN ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE THE VIEW?!



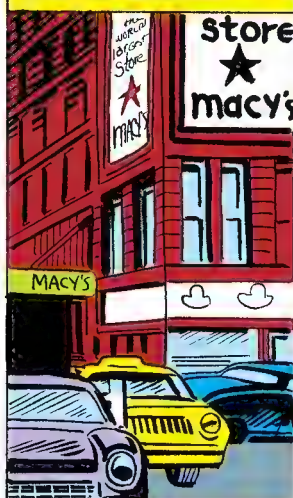
I CAN'T HELP IT IF I WAS DESIGNED TALLER THAN YOU, MICROTRON.

ACROYEAR, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
I-IT IS MY HEAD, I--

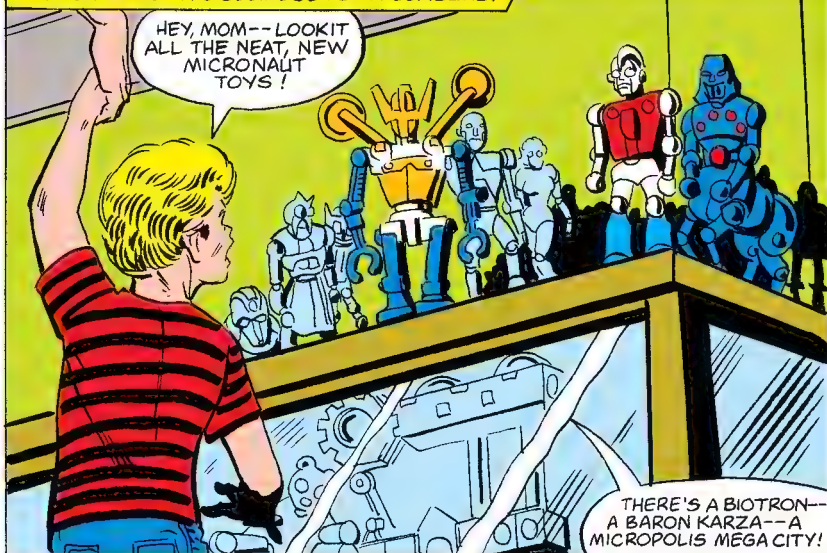


ARRGH!
THE SCREAM SHATTERS THE ATMOSPHERE OF CHEERFUL CAMARADERIE ON THE BRIDGE OF THE MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR...

MEANWHILE, A WORLD UN-
AWARE OF THE MICRONAUTS'
PRESENCE GOES BLITHELY
ABOUT ITS BUSINESS--



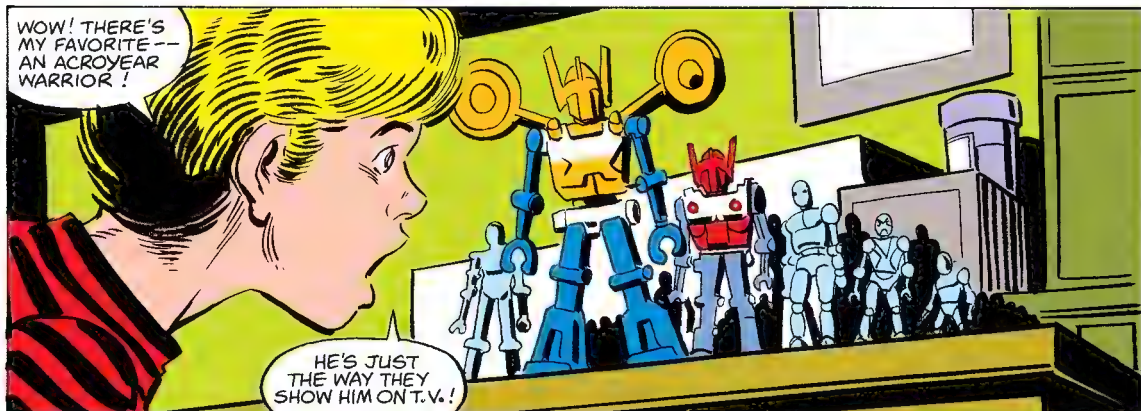
-- AND PART OF ITS BUSINESS IS... PLEASURE!



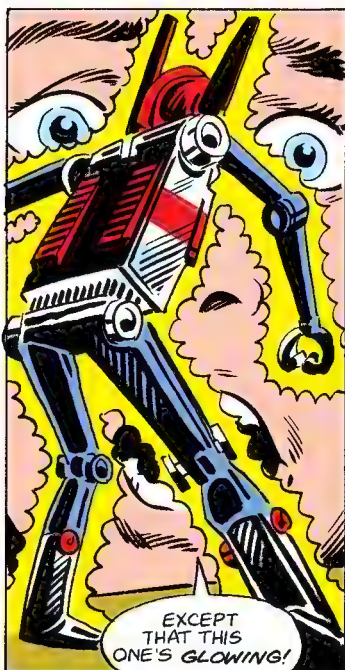
HEY, MOM-- LOOKIT
ALL THE NEAT, NEW
MICRONAUT
TOYS!

THERE'S A BIOTRON--
A BARON KARZA--A
MICROPOLIS MEGA CITY!

WOW! THERE'S
MY FAVORITE--
AN ACROYEAR
WARRIOR!



HE'S JUST
THE WAY THEY
SHOW HIM ON T.V.!



EXCEPT
THAT THIS
ONE'S GLOWING!

KIDS--WHAT IMAGINATIONS! STILL,
YOUR MICRONAUT TOYS HAVE
CREATED QUITE A SENSATION, MR.
KARAMATSU! WHERE DO YOU COME
UP WITH SUCH INNOVATIVE IDEAS?



DOES MACY'S
TELL GIMBELS,
MR. CLARK?

HA-HA!
NO-- I
GUESS
WE DON'T!

BUT HE IS
GLOWING,
MOM!

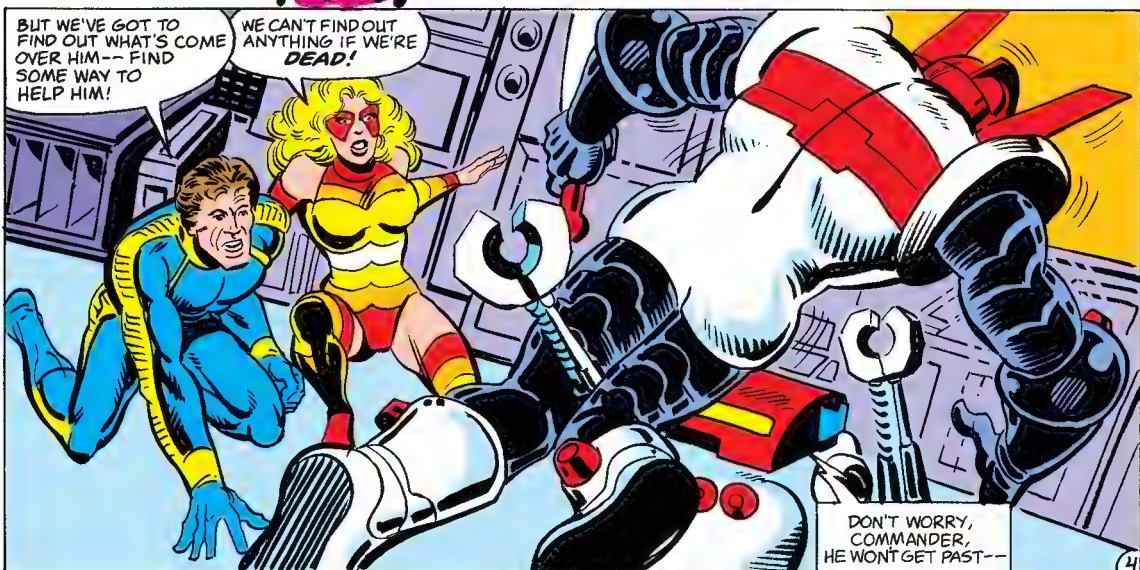
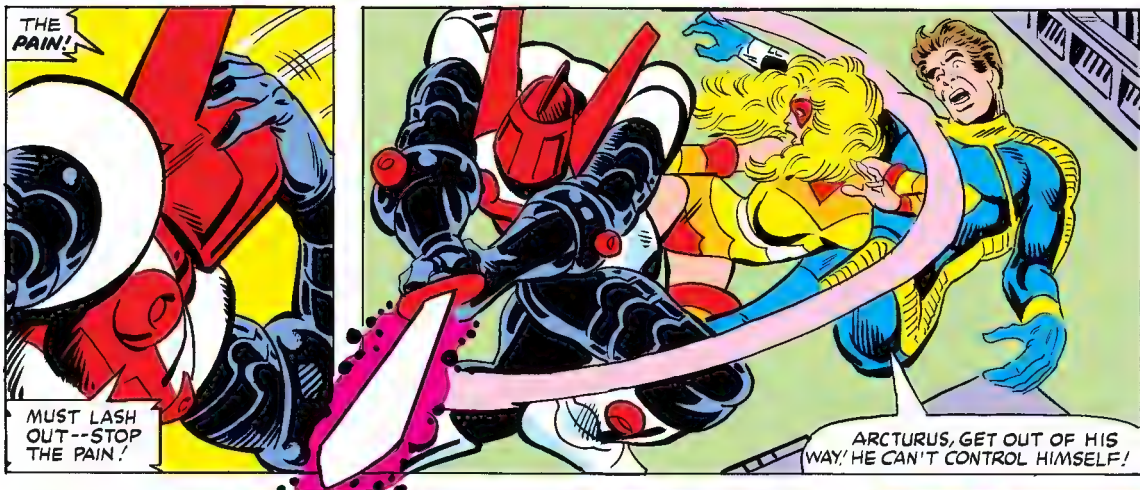
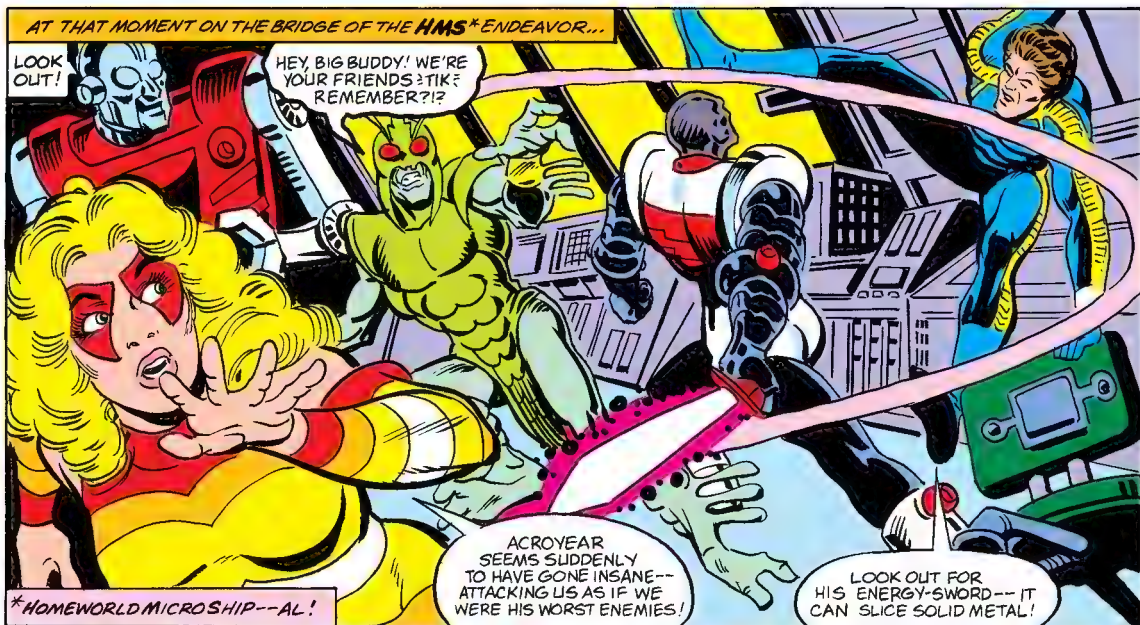
COME
ALONG
TOMMY!

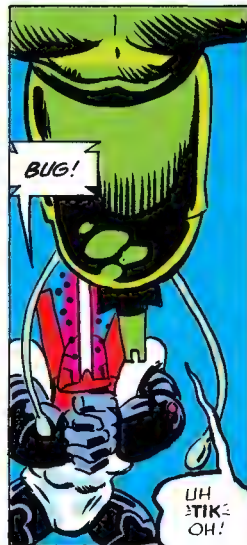
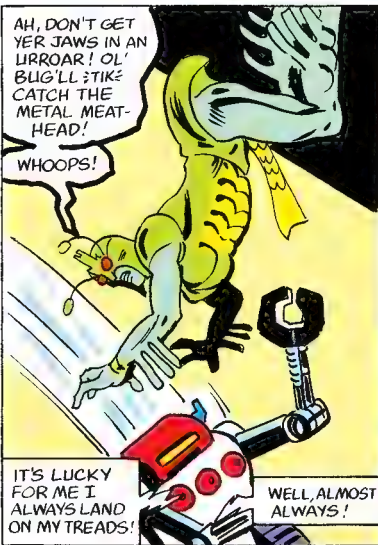
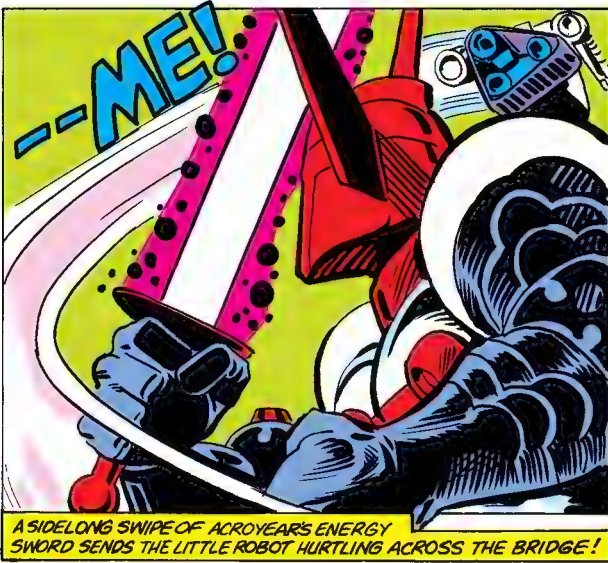
MEANWHILE, UNSEEN BY MACY'S
TOY MANAGER, THE TOY
COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE,
OR THE SUNDAY SHOPPERS--

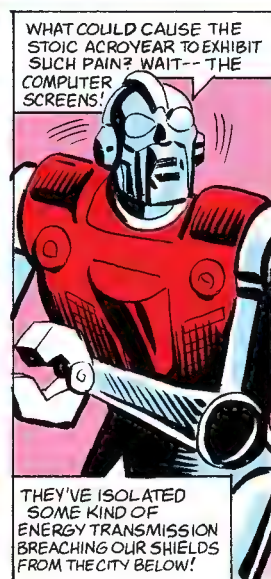
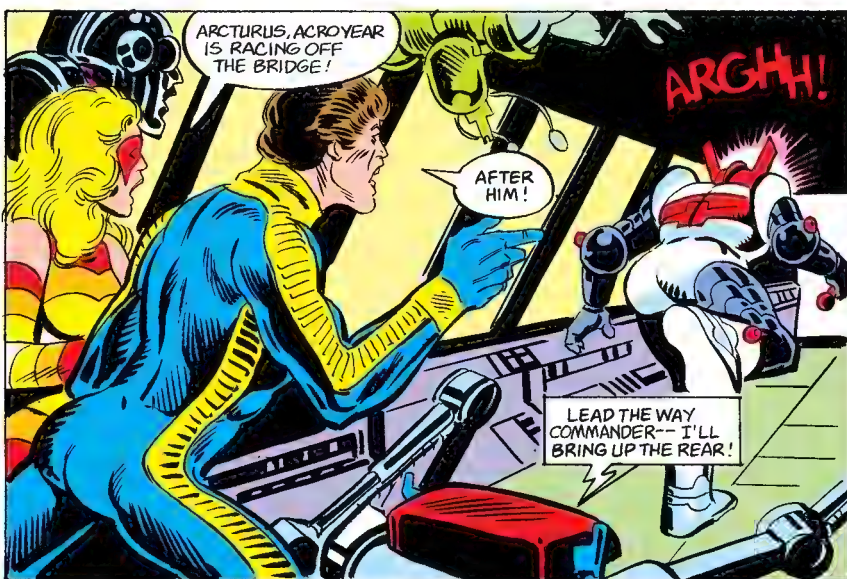
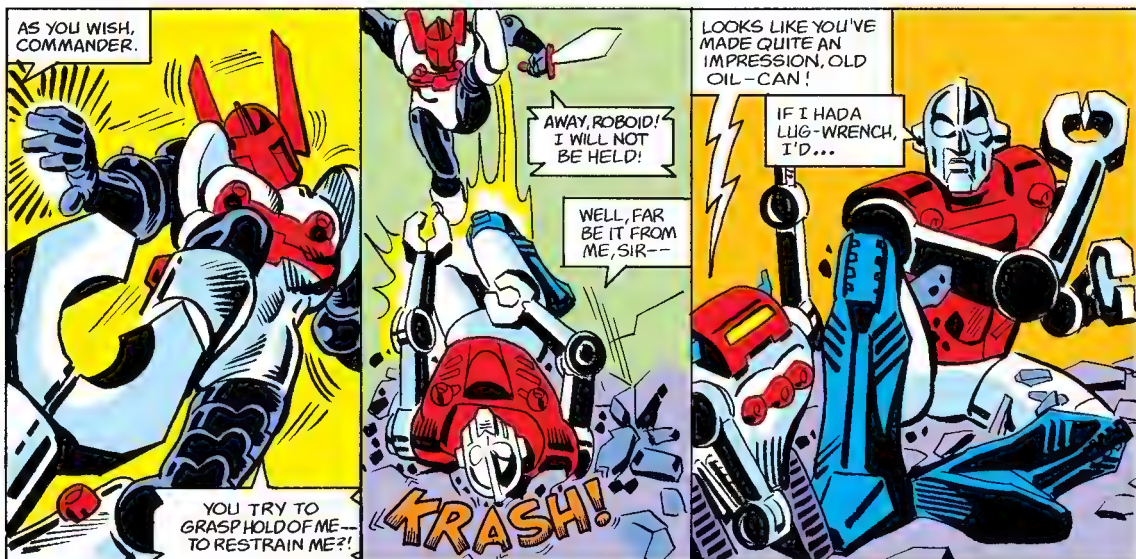
--A FURTIVE
FIGURE FIRES
A FANTASTIC
WEAPON AT
THE ASSEM-
BLAGE OF
MICRONAUT
TOYS!



THOSE TOY
DESIGNS ARE
A TRADE SECRET--
A PRODUCT OF MY
GENIUS--AND THEY ARE
FAR MORE SENSATIONAL
THAN ANYONE DREAMS!

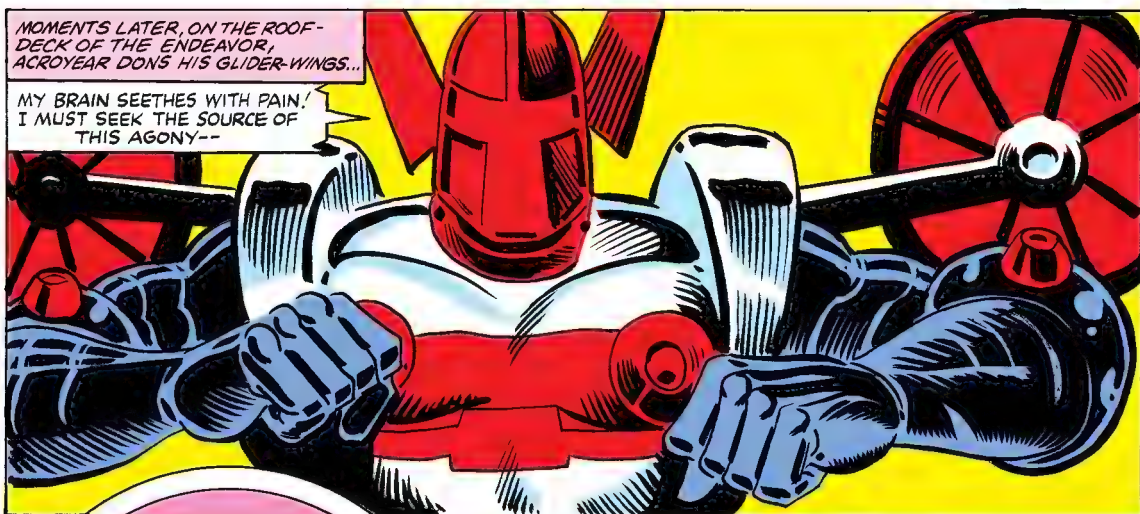






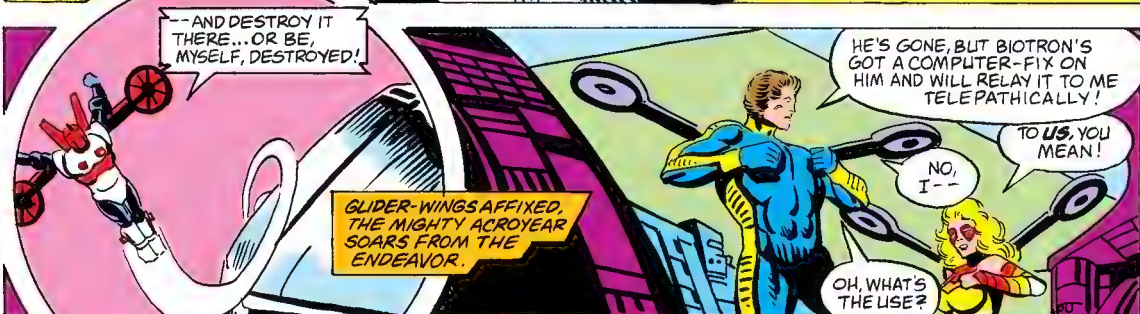
MOMENTS LATER, ON THE ROOF-DECK OF THE ENDEAVOR, ACROYEAR DONS HIS GLIDER-WINGS...

MY BRAIN SEETHES WITH PAIN!
I MUST SEEK THE SOURCE OF
THIS AGONY--



--AND DESTROY IT
THERE...OR BE,
MYSELF, DESTROYED!

GLIDER-WINGS AFFIXED,
THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR
SOARS FROM THE
ENDEAVOR.

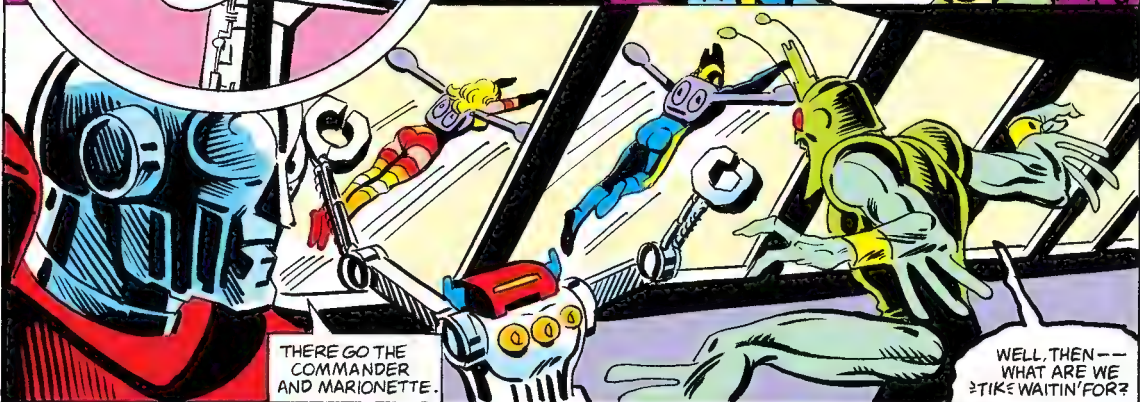


HE'S GONE, BUT BIOTRON'S
GOT A COMPUTER-FIX ON
HIM AND WILL RELAY IT TO ME
TELEPATHICALLY!

TO US, YOU
MEAN!

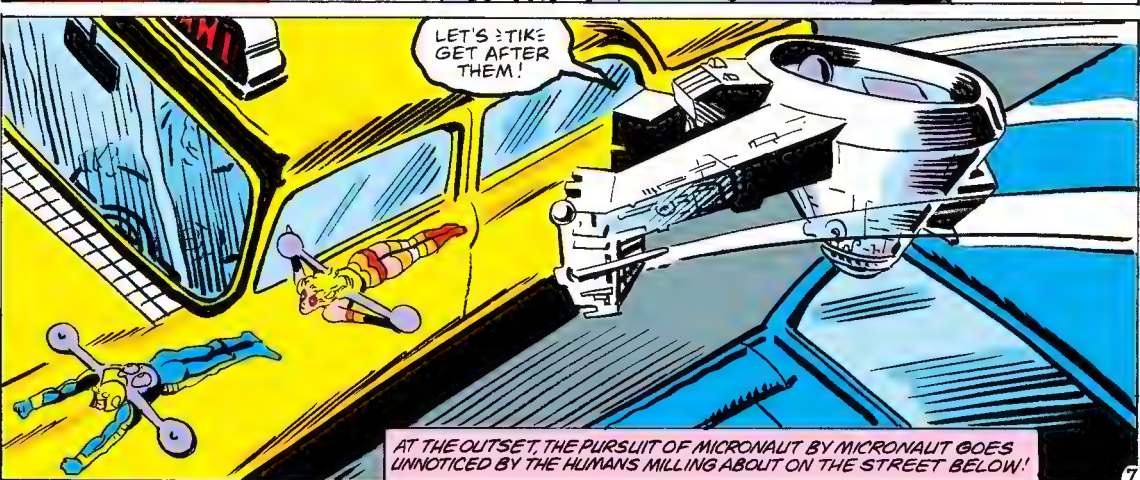
NO,
I--

OH, WHAT'S
THE USE?



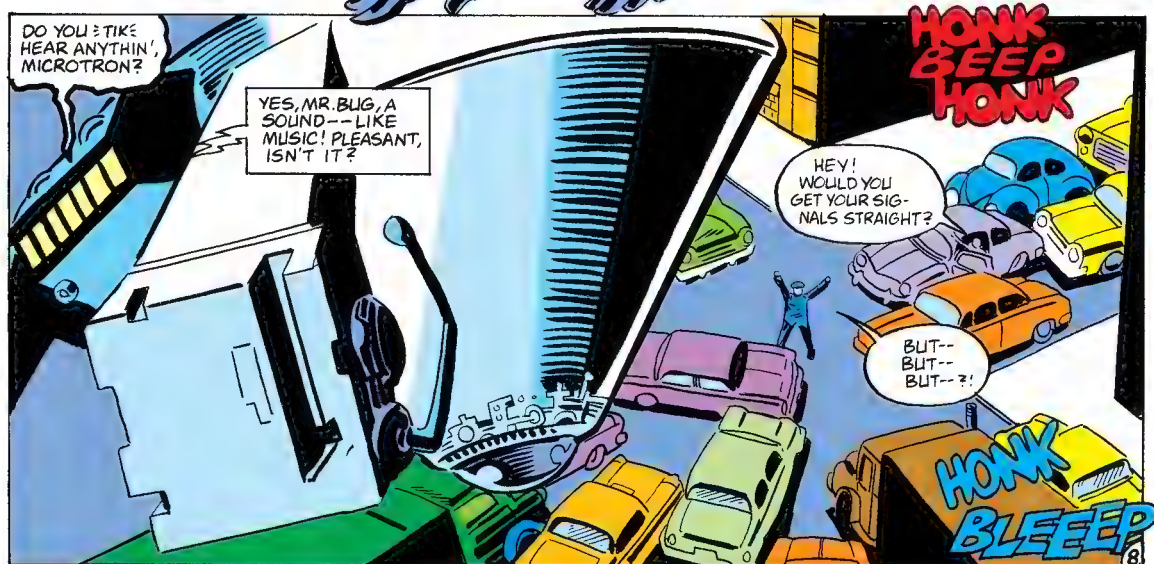
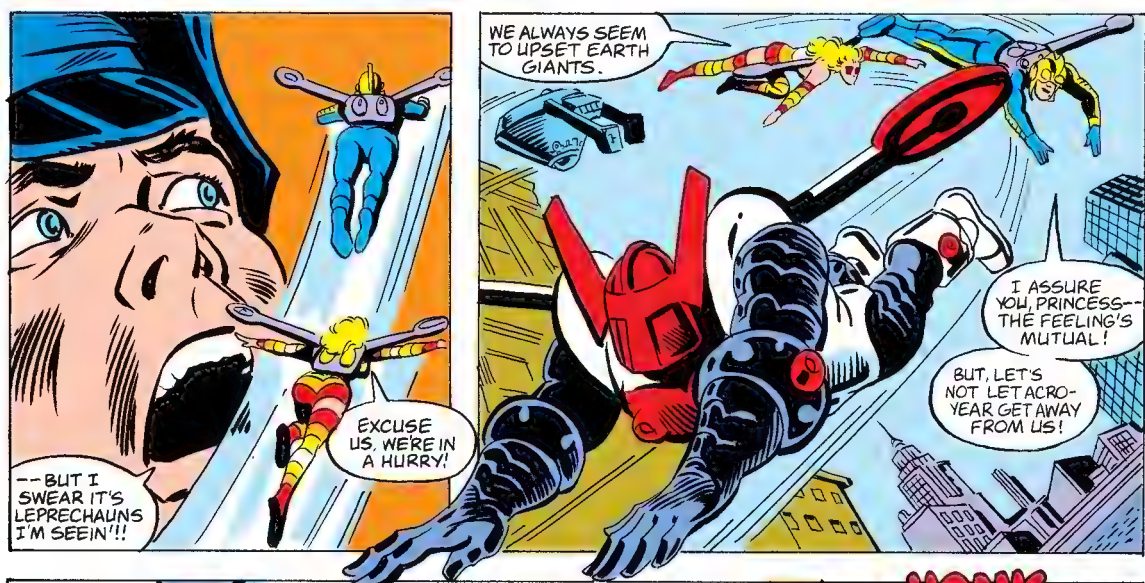
THERE GO THE
COMMANDER
AND MARIONETTE.

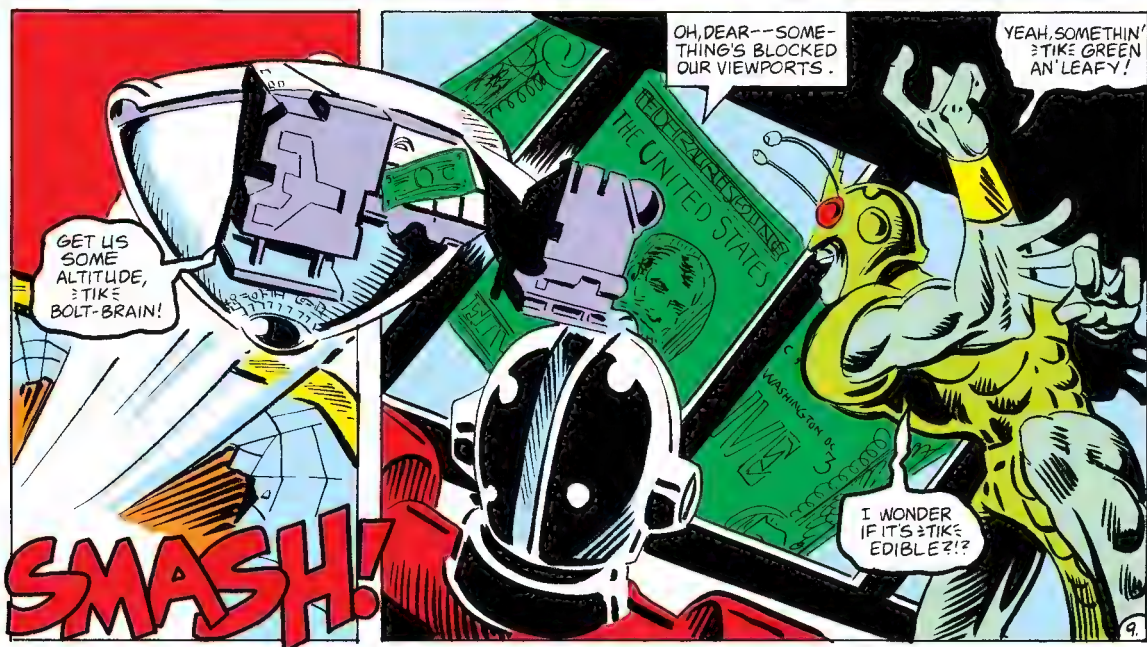
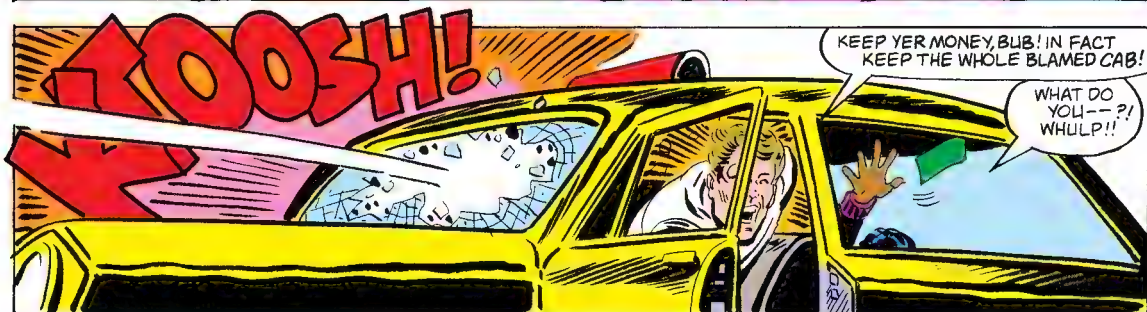
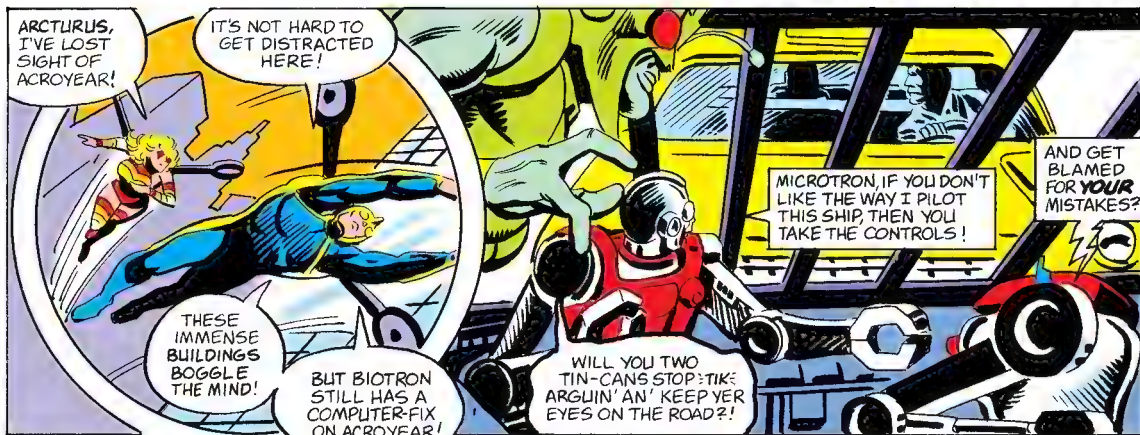
WELL, THEN--
WHAT ARE WE
TO DO? WAITIN' FOR?

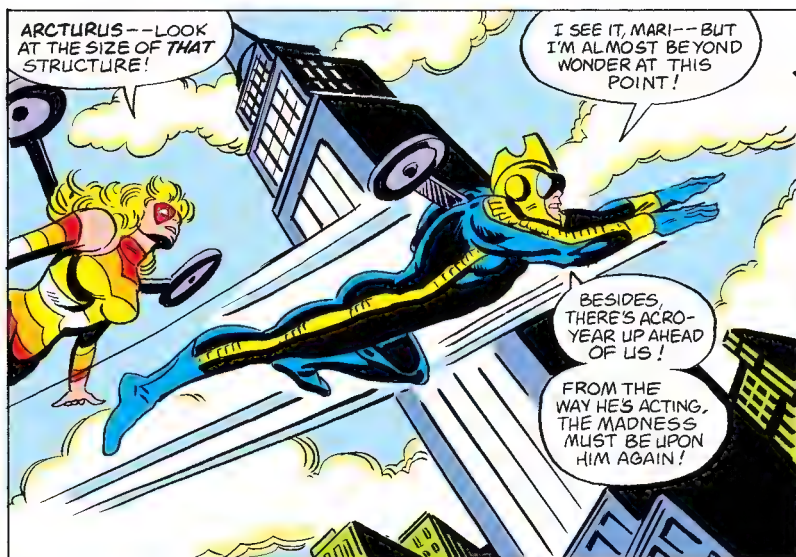


LET'S TO
GET AFTER
THEM!

AT THE OUTSET, THE PURSUIT OF MICRONAUT BY MICRONAUT GOES
UNNOTICED BY THE HUMANS MILLING ABOUT ON THE STREET BELOW!





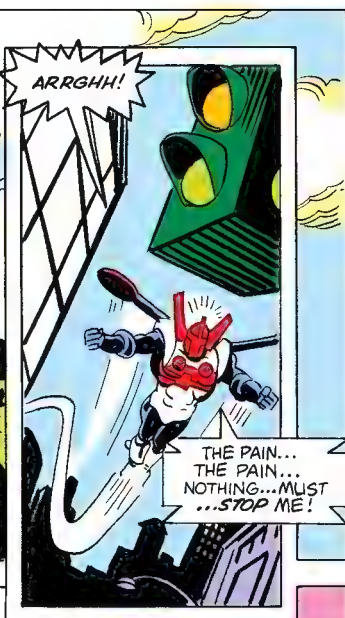


ARCTURUS--LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT STRUCTURE!

I SEE IT, MARI-- BUT I'M ALMOST BEYOND WONDER AT THIS POINT!

BESIDES, THERE'S ACRO-YEAR UP AHEAD OF US!

FROM THE WAY HE'S ACTING, THE MADNESS MUST BE UPON HIM AGAIN!



ARRGHH!

THE PAIN... THE PAIN... NOTHING... MUST ...STOP ME!



THANG

AVENUE OF THE AMERICAN

HOLY ---! SOMETHING'S MADE THAT TRAFFIC SIGNAL FALL---



EEEEEE!! HELP!

--RIGHT TOWARDS THOSE WOMEN!

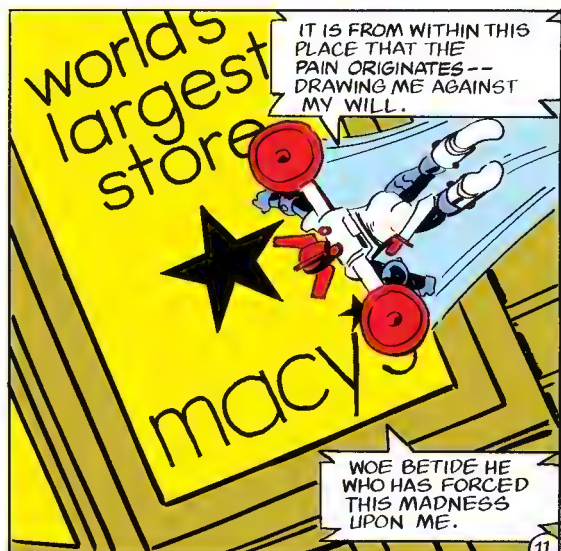
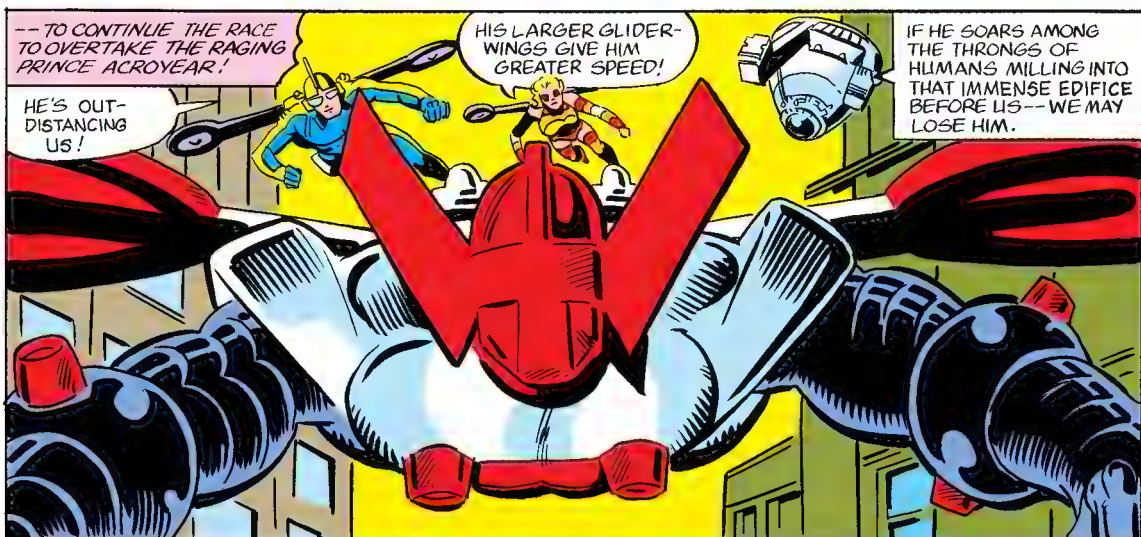
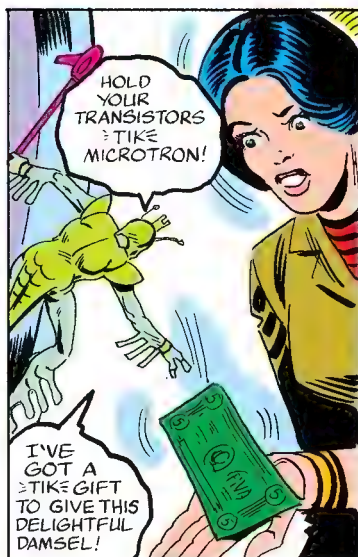


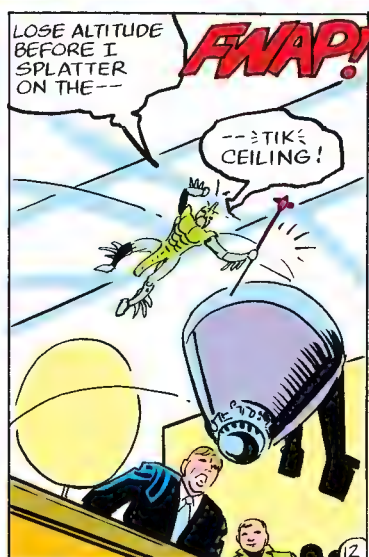
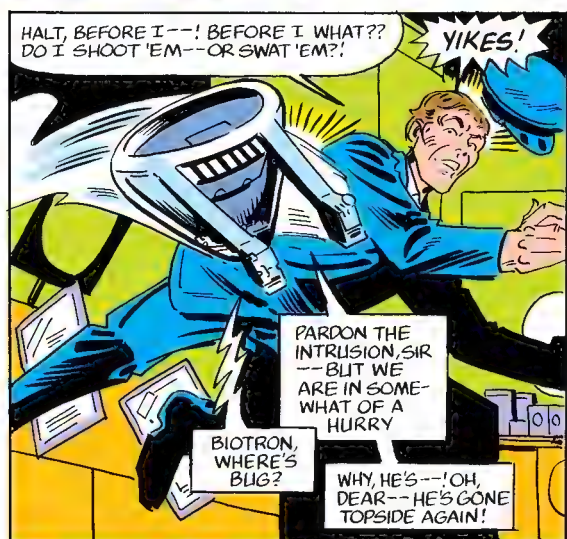
ONLY MY LASERSONIC CAN SAVE THEM NOW!

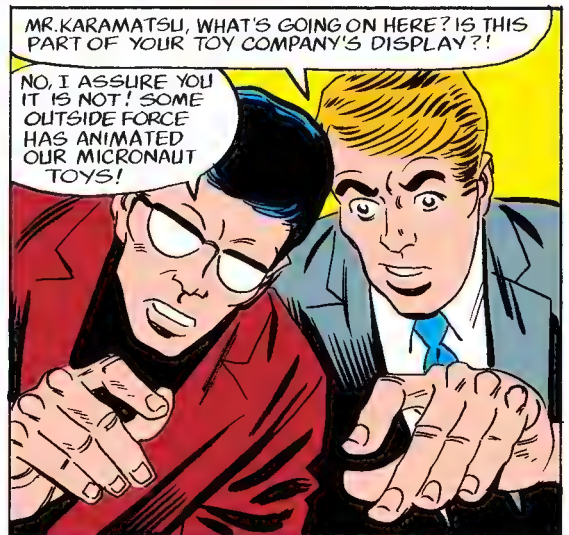
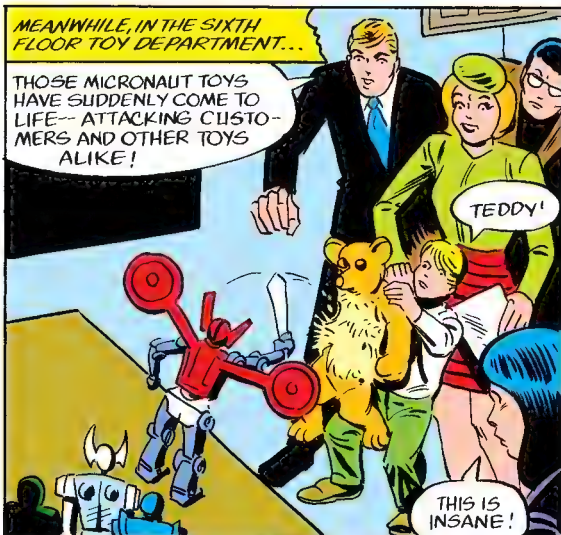
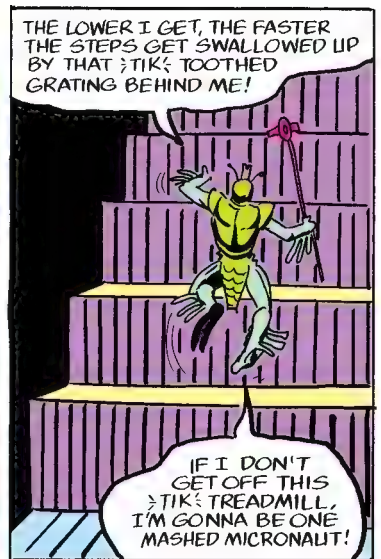
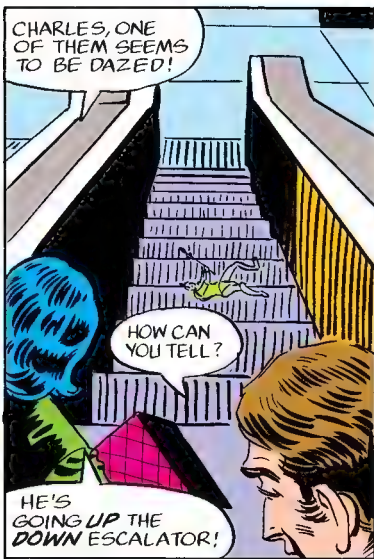
UREET

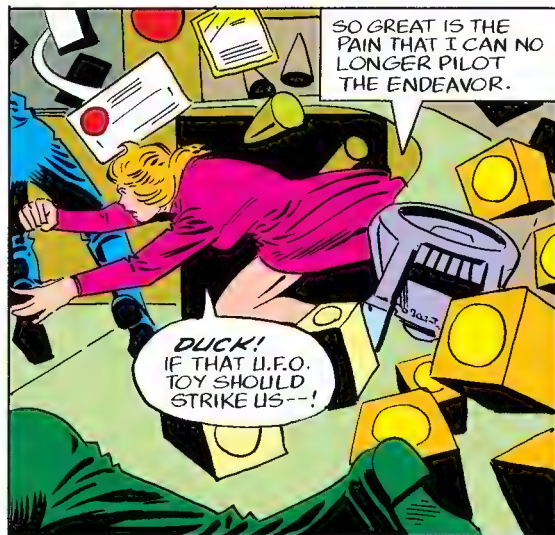
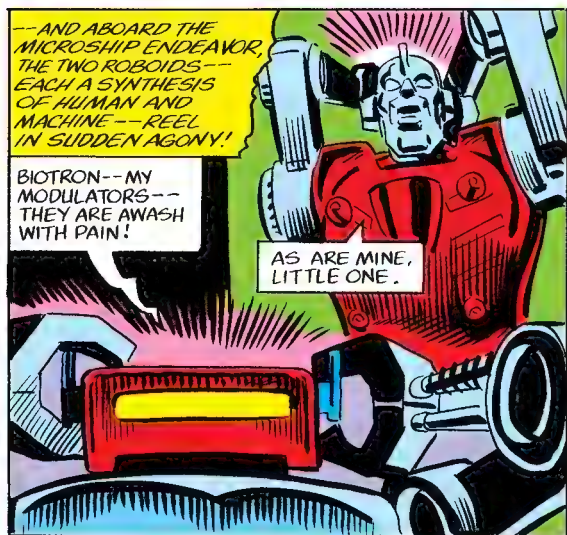
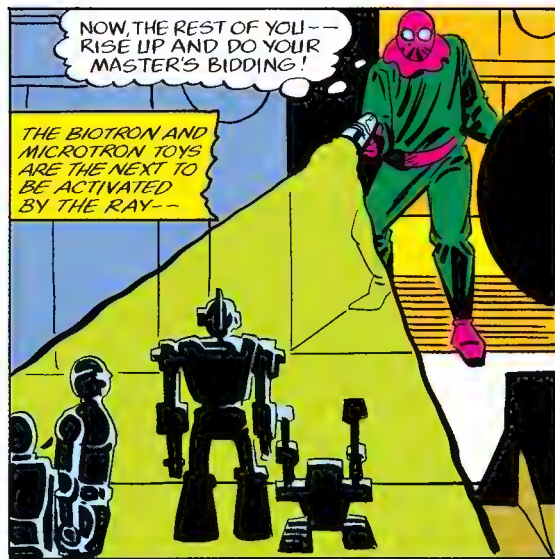
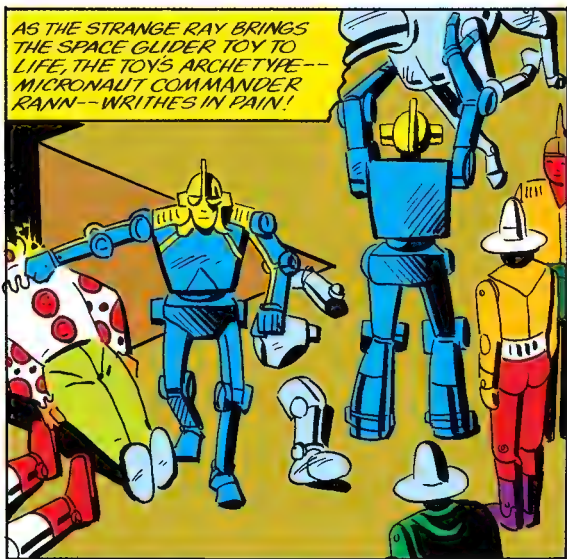


IN AN INSTANT, A BEAM OF FOCUSED LIGHT AND SOUND VAPORIZES THE PLUMMETING TRAFFIC SIGNAL IN MID-FALL!











I DO NOT--LOOK OUT SIR!
WE ARE BEING STRAFED BY A
SPACE GLIDER, AN ACROYEAR,
AND... A TINY WOMAN??!

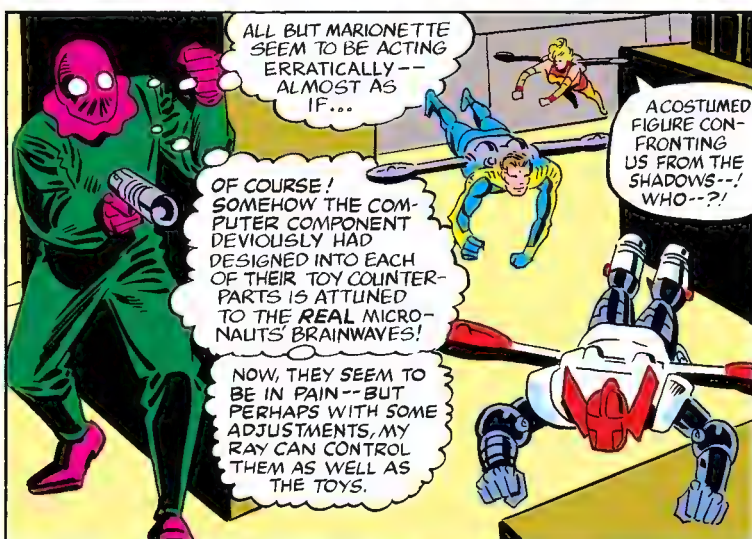
AREN'T THEY YOUR
COMPANY'S TOY
DESIGNS?

THE FIRST TWO--
YES! BUT ALL THREE
SEEM ALMOST ALIVE-- AS IF
THEY WERE CREATURES OF FLESH AND
BLOOD, RATHER THAN PLASTIC!



THAT TOY COMPANY
REPRESENTATIVE IS
MORE RIGHT THAN
HE DREAMS! THOSE
THREE FLYING
FIGURES ARE
REAL!

THEY ARE NOT
TOY DUPLICATIONS--
BUT THE ACTUAL
MICRONAUTS THEMSELVES!

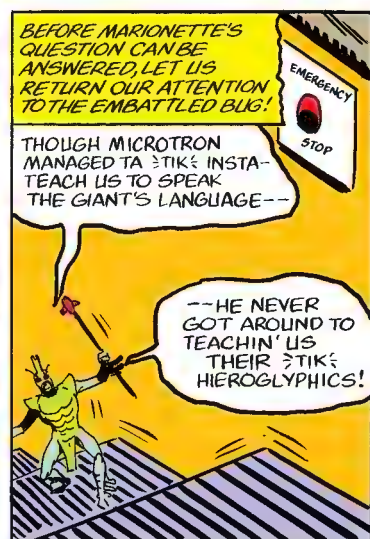


ALL BUT MARIONETTE
SEEM TO BE ACTING
ERRATICALLY--
ALMOST AS
IF...

OF COURSE!
SOMEHOW THE COM-
PUTER COMPONENT
DEVISUALLY HAD
DESIGNED INTO EACH
OF THEIR TOY COUNTER-
PARTS IS ATTUNED
TO THE **REAL** MICRO-
NAUTS' BRAINWAVES!

NOW, THEY SEEM TO
BE IN PAIN-- BUT
PERHAPS WITH SOME
ADJUSTMENTS, MY
RAY CAN CONTROL
THEM AS WELL AS
THE TOYS.

A COSTUMED
FIGURE CON-
FRONTING
US FROM THE
SHADOWS--!
WHO--?!



BEFORE MARIONETTE'S
QUESTION CAN BE
ANSWERED, LET US
RETURN OUR ATTENTION
TO THE EMBATTLED BUG!

THOUGH MICROTRON
MANAGED TA 3TIK3 INSTA-
TEACH US TO SPEAK
THE GIANT'S LANGUAGE--

--HE NEVER
GOT AROUND TO
TEACHIN' US
THEIR 3TIK3
HIEROGLYPHICS!



BUT I CAN'T 3TIK3
IMAGINE WHY ELSE
THE EARTHLINGS
WOULD PLACE
THAT BUTTON
THERE--

EMERGENCY
STOP

--UNLESS ITS
PURPOSE IS
TO SOMEHOW
STOP THIS 3TIK3
STUPID STAIRWAY
IN AN EMERGENCY!



AN' IF THIS 3TIK3
AIN'T AN EMER-
GENCY, THEN I
DON'T KNOW
WHAT IS!

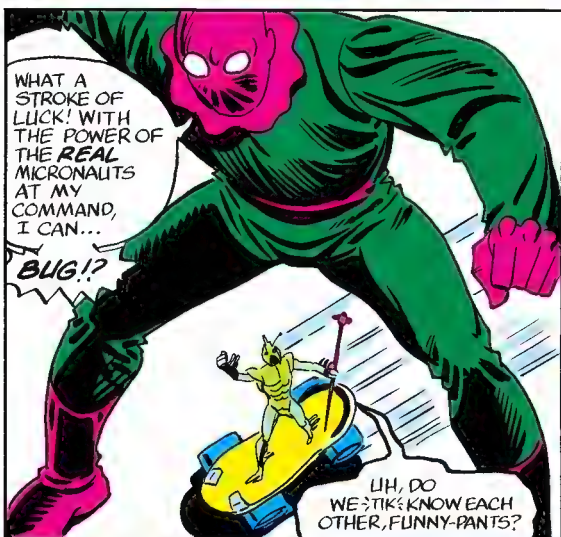
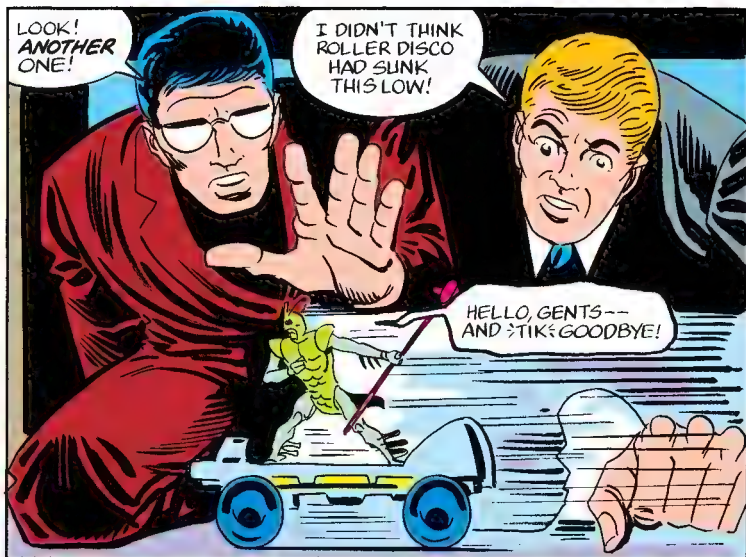
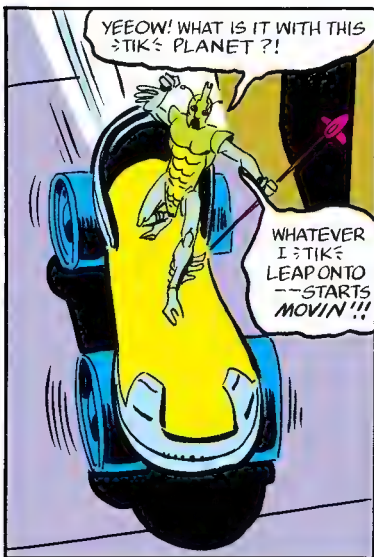
HEY!
WHADDAYA 3TIK3 KNOW?!
IT WORKED! I'VE STOPPED
GOIN' BACKWARDS!



NOW, TO GET
3TIK3 UP
IN THE
WORLD!

UP TO THE NEXT
3TIK3 LEVEL, THAT IS--

--WHERE I GOT
A HUNCH MY MICRONAUT
BUDDIES 3TIK3 NEED ME!

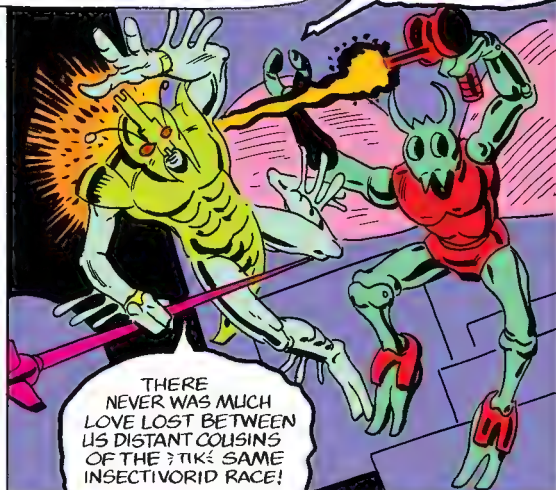


HOWEVER, TOYMASTER QUICKLY GOES BACK ON THE OFFENSIVE!

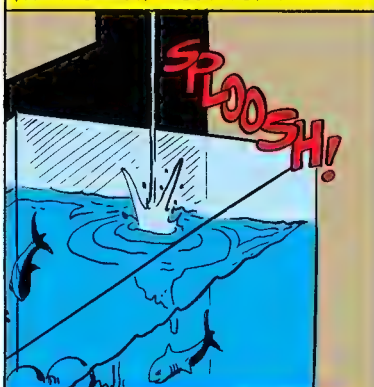
THE MICROVERSE--WHERE THE MICRONAUTS COME FROM--IS INHABITED BY A VAST ARRAY OF RACES--

--AND THEIR COUNTERPARTS WILL SERVE ME, EVEN IF BUG DOES NOT!

BY THE GREAT EGG -- A TIK KRONOS!



AS IF TO LEND CREDENCE TO BUG'S ASSERTION, THE KRONOS REPLICA BLASTS THE MICRONAUT OFF THE DISPLAY COUNTER!

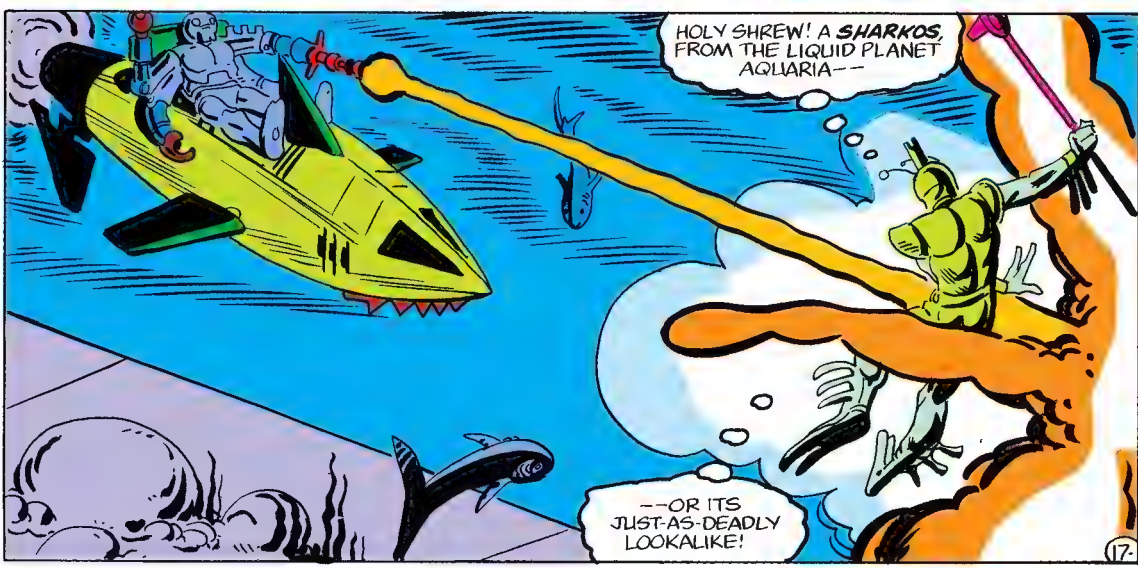


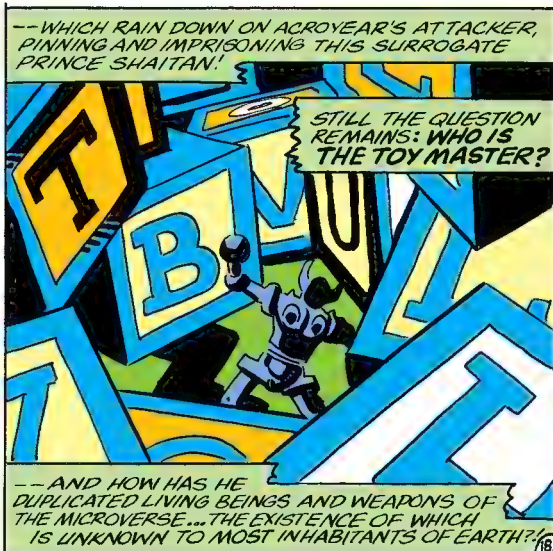
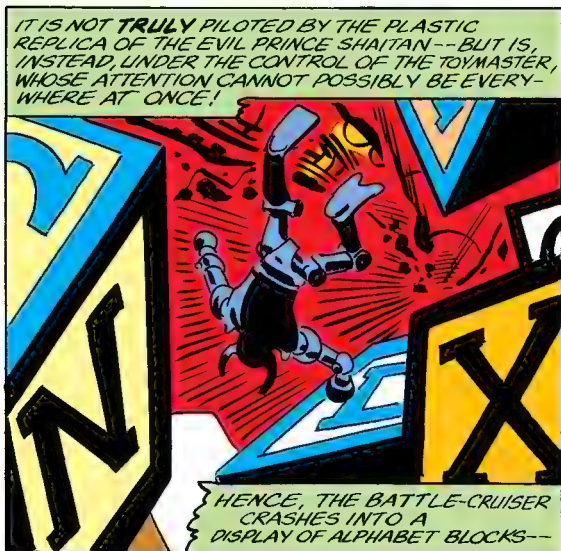
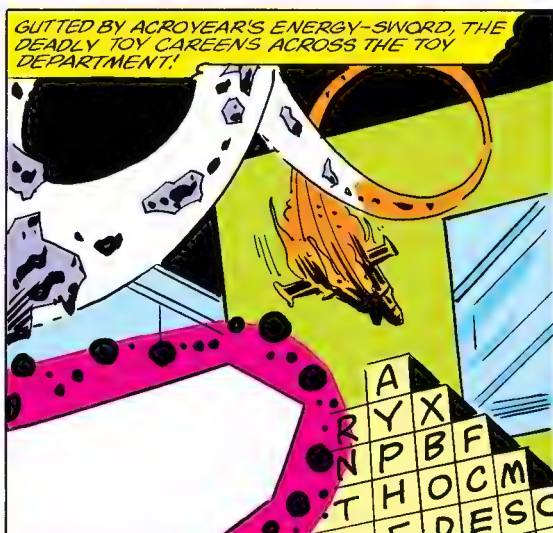
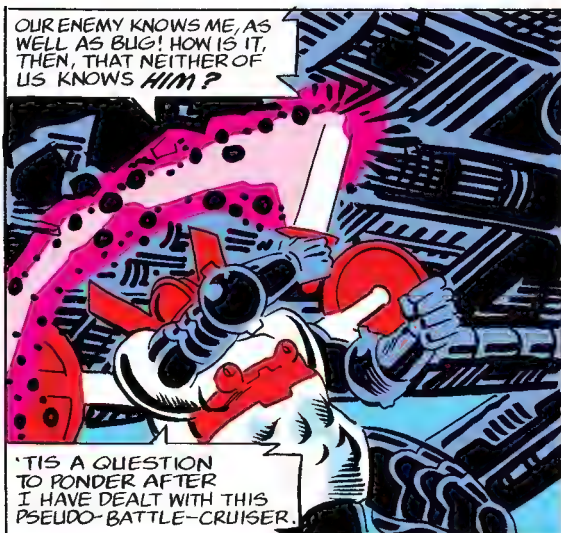
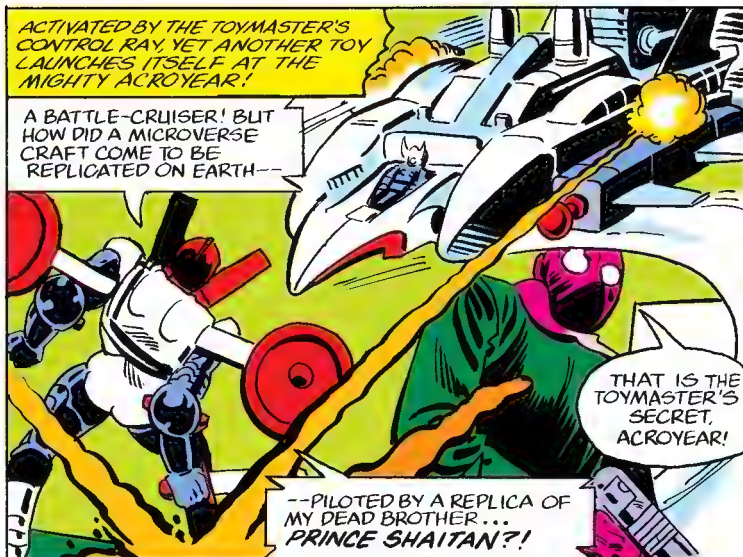
BUG PLUNGES SAFELY TO A WATERY SPLASHDOWN BELOW!

BUT GIVEN BUG'S oft-stated DISINCLINATION FOR THE LIQUID ELEMENT, PERHAPS HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A MORE SOLID SALVATION!



I'D BETTER KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT BEFORE I DROWN! HUH? A RAY SLICING PAST ME?!





MEANWHILE, MARIONETTE FINDS SHE HAS TO DEFEND HERSELF AGAINST AN ANIMATED SPACE-GLIDER TOY!



MY ENEMY IS A REPRODUCTION OF THE MAN I LOVE--

--COMMANDER RANN!



IMITATION OR NOT-- HIS LASERSONIC PISTOL IS AS DEADLY AS THE ORIGINAL!

HE'S SHATTERED MY GLIDER-WINGS!

WITHOUT THEM HOLDING ME ALOFT-- I'LL FALL!



BUT MY GYMNASTIC TRAINING SERVES ME WELL, AS I RIGHT MYSELF IN MID-FALL!

PRAISE SEPSIS! I HAVE LANDED UPON SOME GRID-LIKE PLAYING BOARD!



THE SURROGATE SPACE-GLIDER SOARS AT ME AGAIN! I WILL DEFLECT HIS AIM BY HURLING ONE OF THESE LARGE RED DISCS AT HIM!



MUST LEAP FROM THE GRID--AVOID SUBSEQUENT LASERSONIC FIRE!

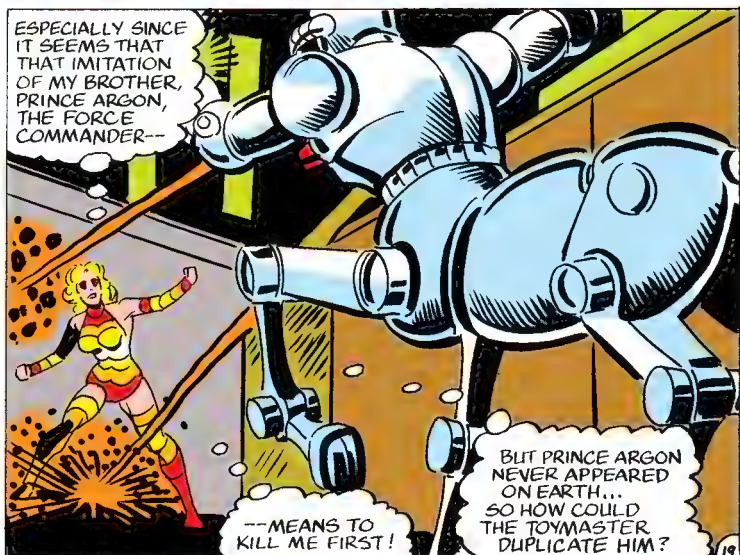
MAAA-MA!



EXCUSE ME?

MAAA-MA!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT YOU SAID! SORRY, BUT I'M NOT READY FOR MOTHERHOOD!

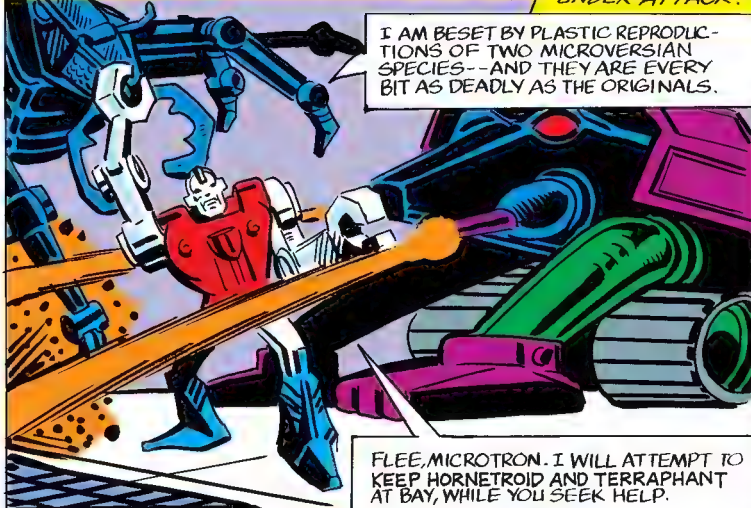


ESPECIALLY SINCE IT SEEMS THAT THAT IMITATION OF MY BROTHER, PRINCE ARGON, THE FORCE COMMANDER--

--MEANS TO KILL ME FIRST!

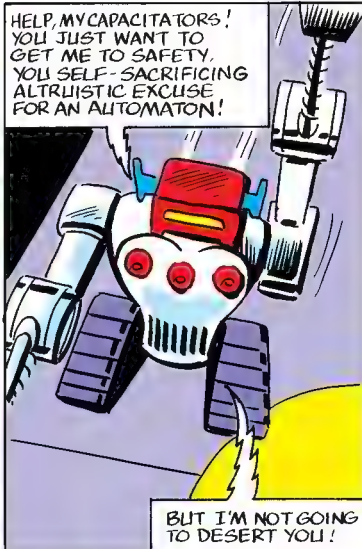
BUT PRINCE ARGON NEVER APPEARED ON EARTH... SO HOW COULD THE TOYMASTER DUPLICATE HIM?

MEANWHILE, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE ENDEAVOR, BIOTRON IS ALSO UNDER ATTACK!



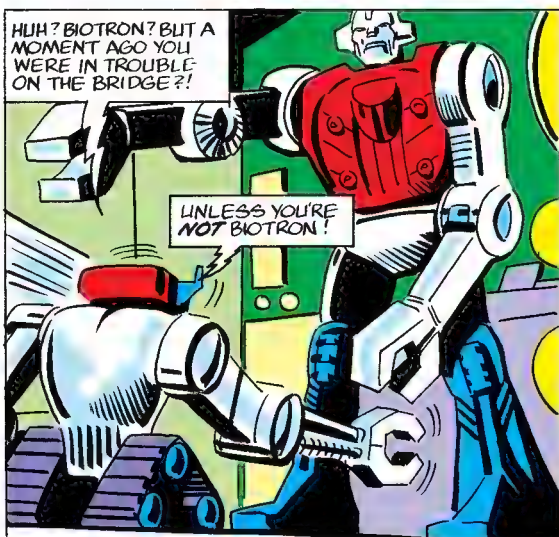
I AM BESET BY PLASTIC REPRODUCTIONS OF TWO MICROVERSION SPECIES--AND THEY ARE EVERY BIT AS DEADLY AS THE ORIGINALS.

FLEE, MICROTRON. I WILL ATTEMPT TO KEEP HORNETROID AND TERRAPHANT AT BAY, WHILE YOU SEEK HELP.



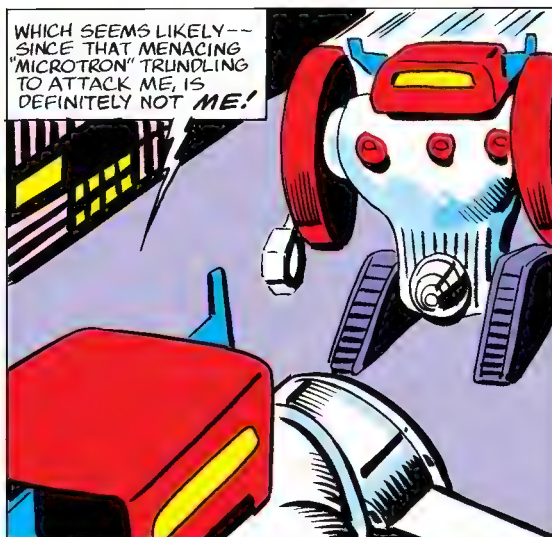
HELP, MY CAPACITATORS! YOU JUST WANT TO GET ME TO SAFETY, YOU SELF-SACRIFICING ALTRUISTIC EXCUSE FOR AN ALTIMATON!

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO DESERT YOU!

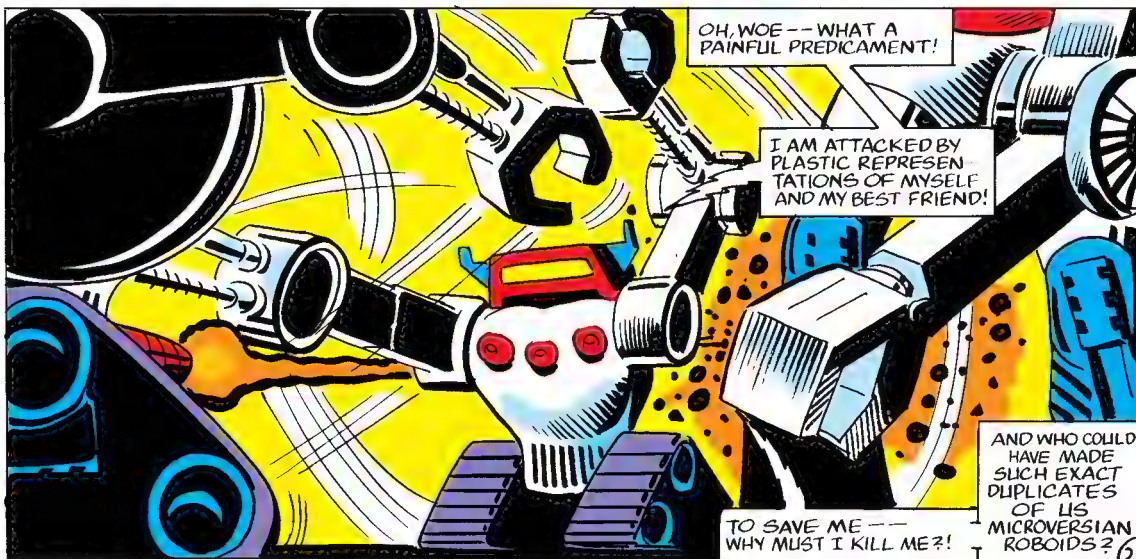


HUH? BIOTRON? BUT A MOMENT AGO YOU WERE IN TROUBLE ON THE BRIDGE?!

UNLESS YOU'RE *NOT* BIOTRON!



WHICH SEEMS LIKELY--SINCE THAT MENACING "MICROTRON" TRUNDLING TO ATTACK ME, IS DEFINITELY NOT *ME*!

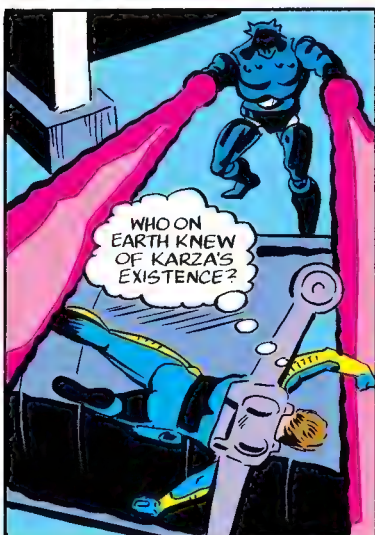
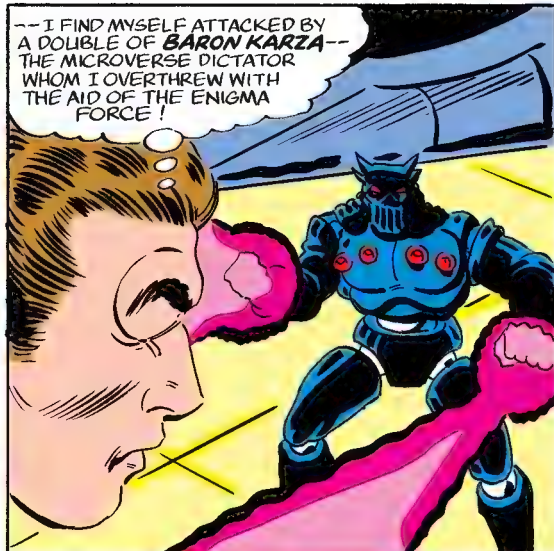
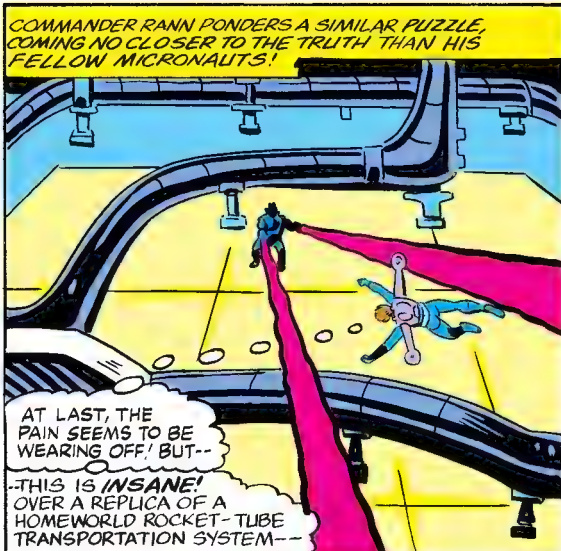


OH, WOE--WHAT A PAINFUL PREDICAMENT!

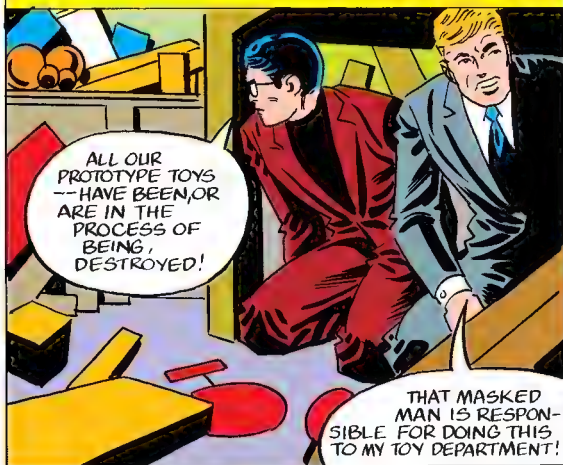
I AM ATTACKED BY PLASTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF MYSELF AND MY BEST FRIEND!

TO SAVE ME--WHY MUST I KILL ME?!

AND WHO COULD HAVE MADE SUCH EXACT DUPLICATES OF HIS MICROVERSION ROBODS?



WATCHING THE DEVASTATION IN DISBELIEF FROM BENEATH A NEARBY COUNTER, ARE THE TOY COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE AND THE MANAGER OF MACY'S TOY DEPARTMENT...



ALL OUR PROTOTYPE TOYS -- HAVE BEEN, OR ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING, DESTROYED!

THAT MASKED MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DOING THIS TO MY TOY DEPARTMENT!

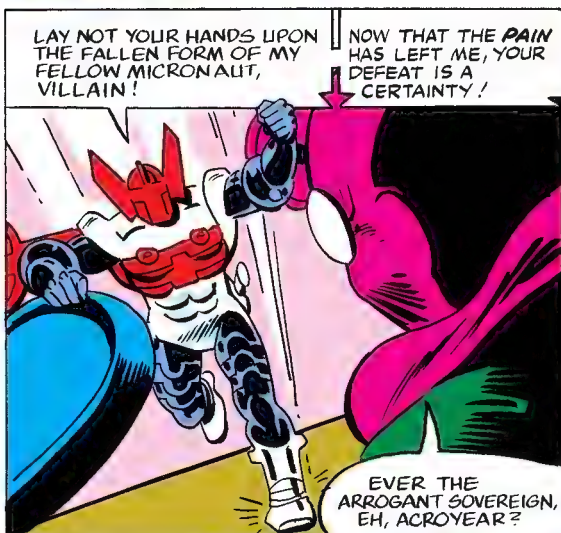
YOU SEE, COMMANDER-- HISTORY DOES NOT ALWAYS REPEAT ITSELF! WHERE YOU DEFEATED THE ORIGINAL BARON KARZA--



--HIS REPLICA-- UNDER MY CONTROL-- HAS EASILY VANQUISHED YOU!

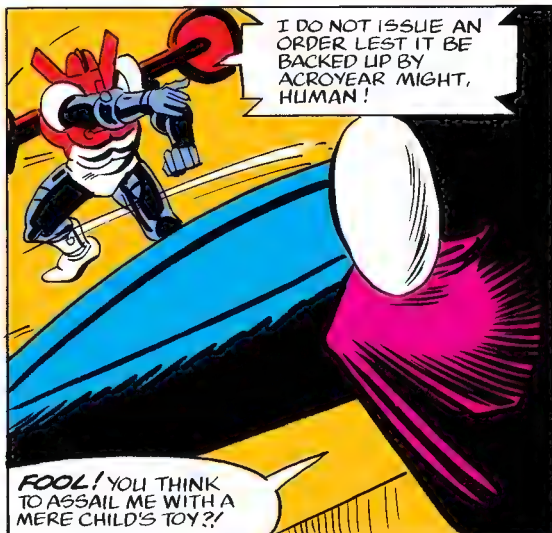
LAY NOT YOUR HANDS UPON THE FALLEN FORM OF MY FELLOW MICRONAUT, VILLAIN!

NOW THAT THE PAIN HAS LEFT ME, YOUR DEFEAT IS A CERTAINTY!



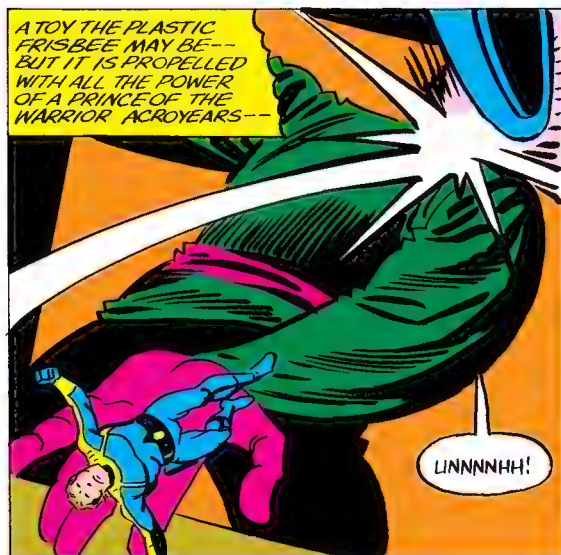
EVER THE ARROGANT SOVEREIGN, EH, ACROYEAR?

I DO NOT ISSUE AN ORDER LEST IT BE BACKED UP BY ACROYEAR MIGHT, HUMAN!



FOOL! YOU THINK TO ASSAIL ME WITH A MERE CHILD'S TOY?!

A TOY THE PLASTIC FRISBEE MAY BE-- BUT IT IS PROPELLED WITH ALL THE POWER OF A PRINCE OF THE WARRIOR ACROYEARS--



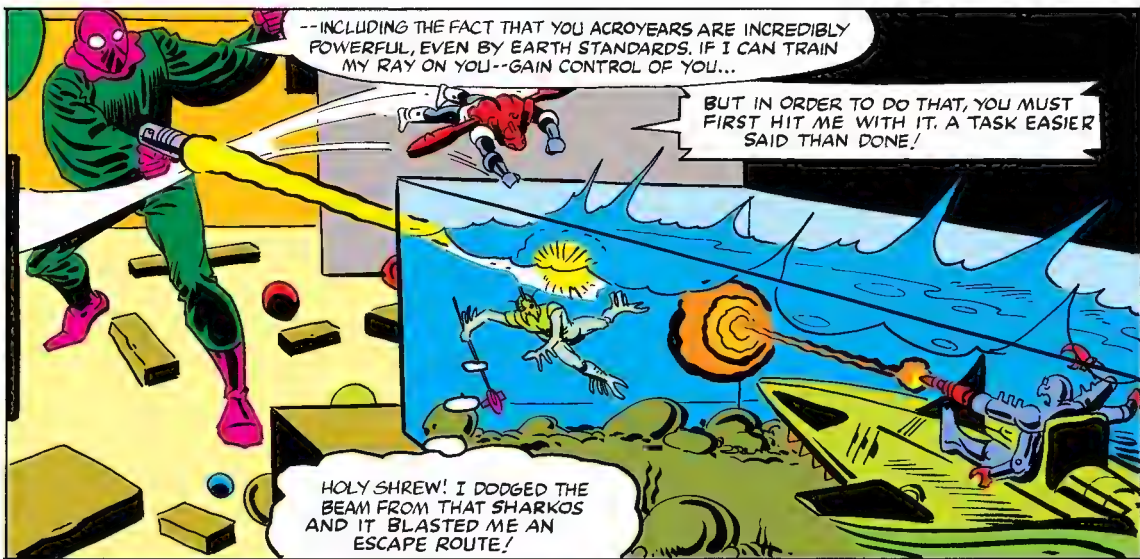
LIINNHH!

CURSE YOU AND ALL YOUR EBONY-SKINNED RACE!

YOU KNOW THAT FACT AS WELL--? WHEN NO HUMAN HAS EVER BEEN KNOWN TO PEER BENEATH THE CONCEALING HELMETS ALL ACROYEARS WEAR?



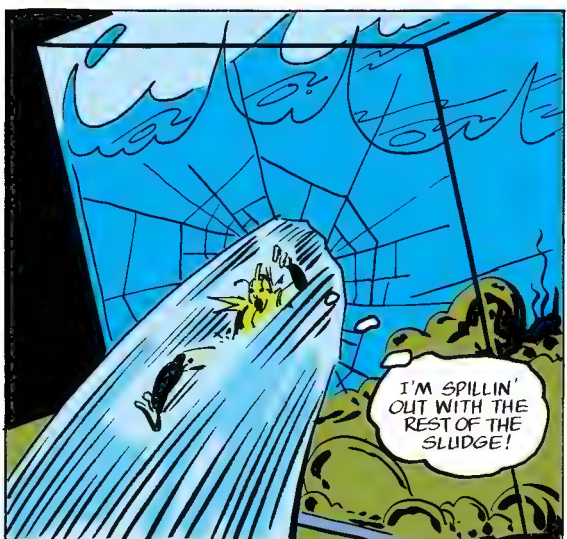
I KNOW ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PRECIOUS MICROVERSE--



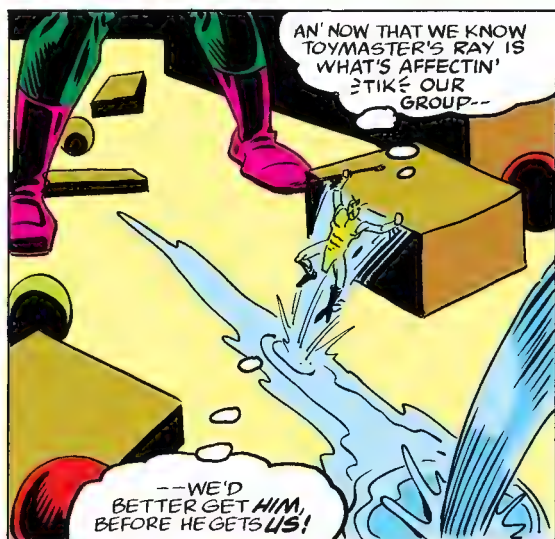
--INCLUDING THE FACT THAT YOU ACROYEARS ARE INCREDIBLY POWERFUL, EVEN BY EARTH STANDARDS. IF I CAN TRAIN MY RAY ON YOU--GAIN CONTROL OF YOU...

BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, YOU MUST FIRST HIT ME WITH IT. A TASK EASIER SAID THAN DONE!

HOLY SHREW! I DODGED THE BEAM FROM THAT SHARKOS AND IT BLASTED ME AN ESCAPE ROUTE!



I'M SPILLIN' OUT WITH THE REST OF THE SLUDGE!



AN' NOW THAT WE KNOW TOYMASTER'S RAY IS WHAT'S AFFECTIN' ßTIKE OUR GROUP--

--WE'D BETTER GET HIM, BEFORE HE GETS US!



HEADS ßTIKE UP, HOTSHOT! YOU'VE CHOREOGRAPHED THIS LITTLE SHINDIG UP TILL NOW--

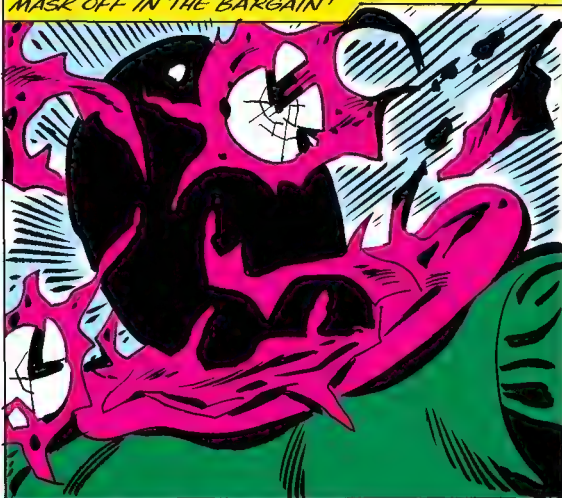
EH?



--BUT THIS IS WHERE WE START CALLIN' THE SHOTS!

BUG--FREE AGAIN? YAARGHH!!

SET AT HALF FORCE, BUG'S ROCKET-LANCE
BLASTS TOYMASTER BACK--AND SHEARS HIS
MASK OFF IN THE BARGAIN!



THERE IS A SUDDEN SHARP STENCH OF SEARING
CLOTH, MELTING PLASTIC AND BURNING FLESH!



THEN, HAVING DEFEATED THEIR RESPECTIVE OP-
PONENTS, THERE ARISES A COLLECTIVE GASP OF
RECOGNITION FROM THE ASSEMBLED MICRONAUTS!



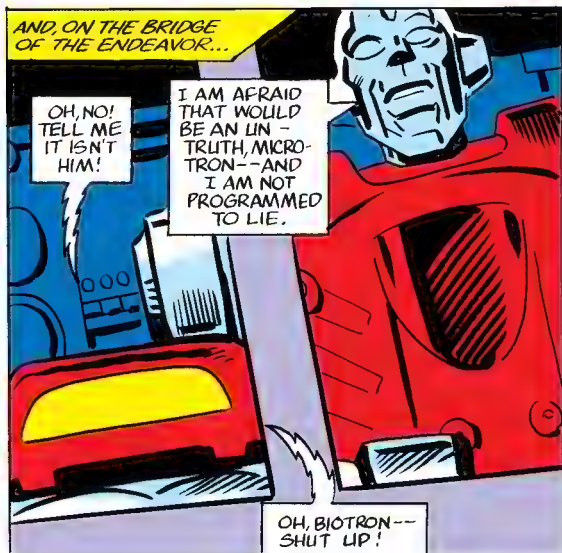
HOLY SHREW! ACROYEAR, BIG BUDDY--
IT'S TIK: HIM!!

OF COURSE!
NO OTHER HUMAN
COULD HAVE KNOWN
SO MUCH ABOUT
US AND THE
MICROVERSE!



BUT I THOUGHT THE
KNOWLEDGE HAD DRIVEN
HIM MAD?!

HAS THIS ATTACK ON US--
HIS EVIL USE OF THESE
HARMLESS TOYS--
BEEN RATIONAL?



AND, ON THE BRIDGE
OF THE ENDEAVOR...

OH, NO!
TELL ME
IT ISN'T
HIM!

I AM AFRAID
THAT WOULD
BE AN LIE--
TRUTH, MICRO-
TRON--AND
I AM NOT
PROGRAMMED
TO LIE.

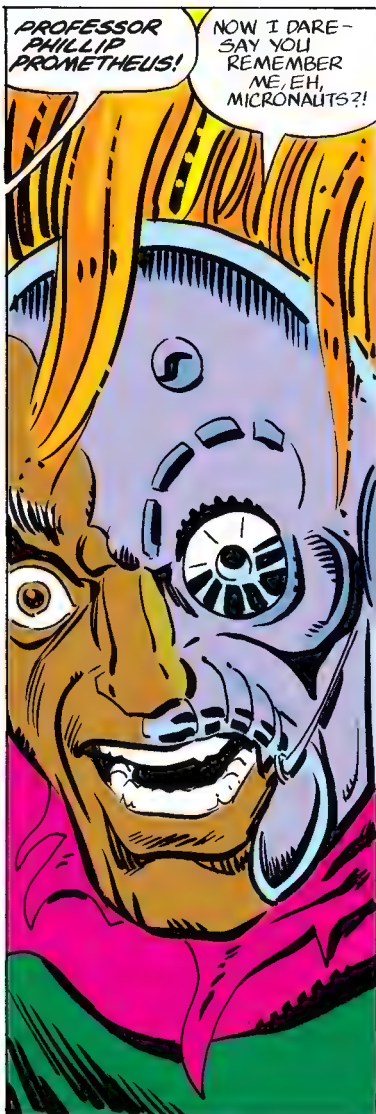
OH, BIOTRON--
SHUT UP!



GREAT SCOTT! HE--
HE IS THE MAN WHOSE
DESIGNS INSPIRED
OUR LINE OF
"MICRONAUT"
TOYS!

YOU-- YOU MEAN
YOUR COMPANY
DIDN'T CREATE
THEM?!

WE BASED THEM
ON THE DESIGNS OF A
MAN WHO CLAIMED THAT A REAL
MICROVERSE EXISTED! THAT MAN!



PROFESSOR
PHILLIP
PROMETHEUS!

NOW I DARE-
SAY YOU
REMEMBER
ME, EH,
MICRONAUTS?!



I STAND REVEALED BEFORE YOU--
TOYMASTER NO LONGER-- BUT,
RATHER, THE PERFECT SYNTHESIS
OF MAN AND MACHINE!

YEAH, WE
RECOGNIZE YA! YOU'RE
THE HALF-FACED CYBORG
THAT WANTED TIK-TA STUDY
US BY STICKIN' US INSIDE
AIR-TIGHT SPECIMEN TUBES!



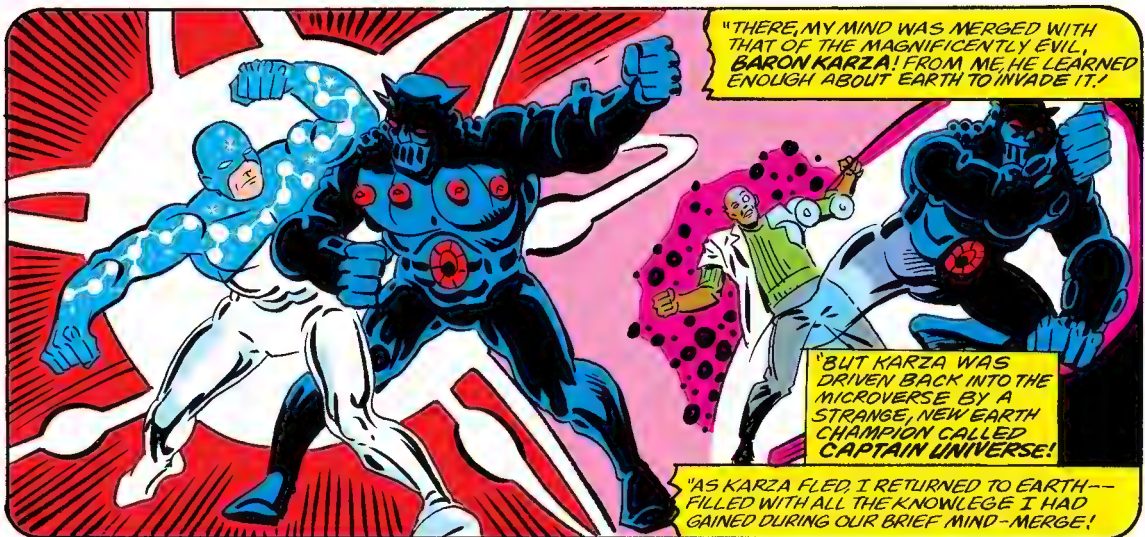
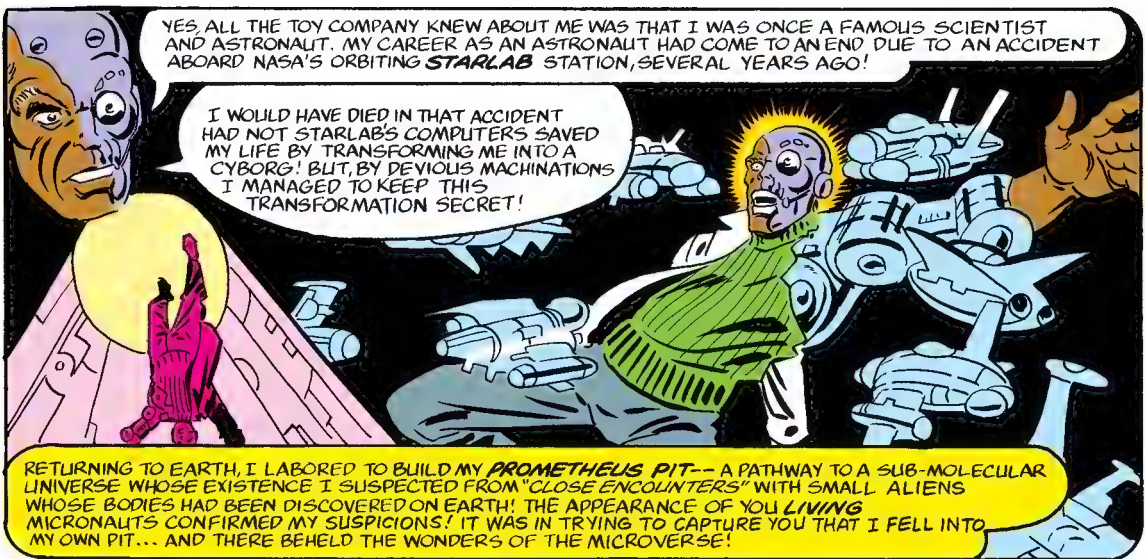
MR. KARAMATSU, ARE YOU SAYING
THAT THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR
DESIGNING YOUR LINE OF TOYS
IS THAT-- THAT INHUMAN?!

WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY HE...
INSPIRED THEM, SIR!

PROMETHEUS CAME TO US
WITH NOTEBOOKS FULL OF DRAWINGS OF
ALIEN RACES AND WITH PROTOTYPES
OF WEIRD, OTHERWORDLY MACHINES!
WE BASED OUR DESIGNS ON HIS IDEAS!

WHEN WE HIRED
THIS "TOYMASTER" AS
PART OF OUR TOY PROMO-
TION, WE NEVER DREAMED
IT WAS REALLY PROMETHEUS
IN DISGUISE, TRYING TO TEST
THAT CONTROL RAY OF
HIS ON OUR MICRONAUTS.

25





"ONCE FREE, I TOOK MY 'HARMLESS' PROTOTYPES TO THE ONE PLACE THEY COULD BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION!"

YOUR TOY DESIGNS ARE BRILLIANT, PROFESSOR!

THEN YOU WILL MANUFACTURE THEM?

OF COURSE!



THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE WORKED OUT, AND THE TOYS WENT INTO PRODUCTION! UNBENOWNST TO THE TOY COMPANY, HOWEVER, I HAD INTRODUCED A 'CONTROL CHIP'-- A TINY COMPUTER PROGRAM-- INTO THE TOYS' DESIGNS! IT WAS SO SMALL THAT ITS PURPOSE WAS NOT LIKELY TO BE DISCOVERED!

"BUT WHEN ACTIVATED BY MY CONTROL RAY, IT WOULD BRING THE TOYS TO LIFE--

--A VAST ARMY, AS POWERFUL AS THEIR ARCHETYPES IN THE MICROVERSE!"



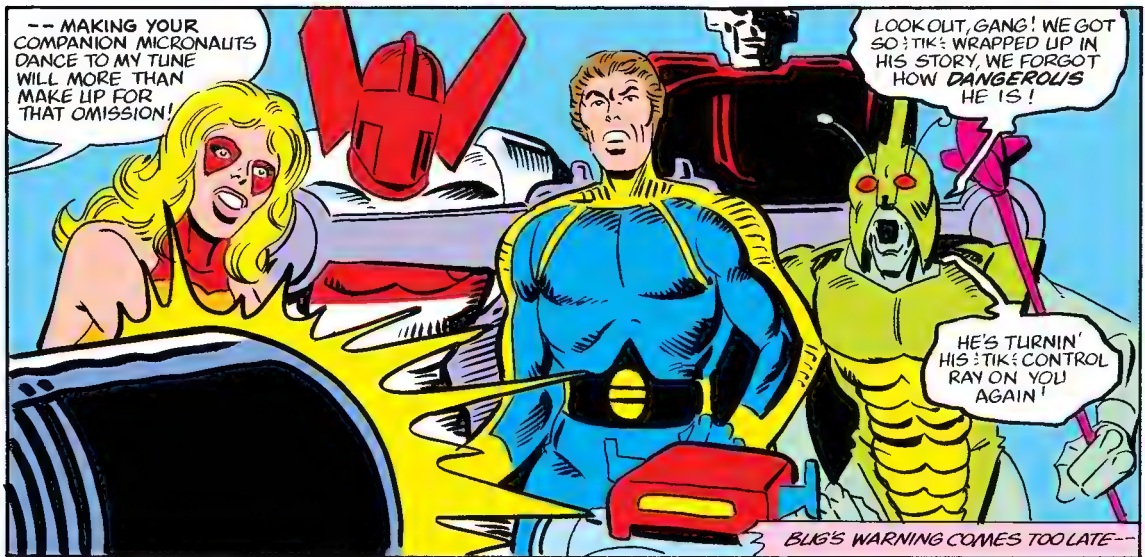
ATTUNED TO OUR BRAIN-WAVES, THE CHIPS SENT OUT THE SUMMONS WE WERE UNABLE TO RESIST.

INFLECTING PAIN ON THOSE OF US WHO HAD BEEN DUPLICATED AS TOYS.

SO, WE WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO TURN INTO ?TIK:TOYS, HUH, HALF-FACE?



APPARENTLY THE TOY COMPANY DID NOT THINK SO, BUG! STILL, WHILE I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL YOU--

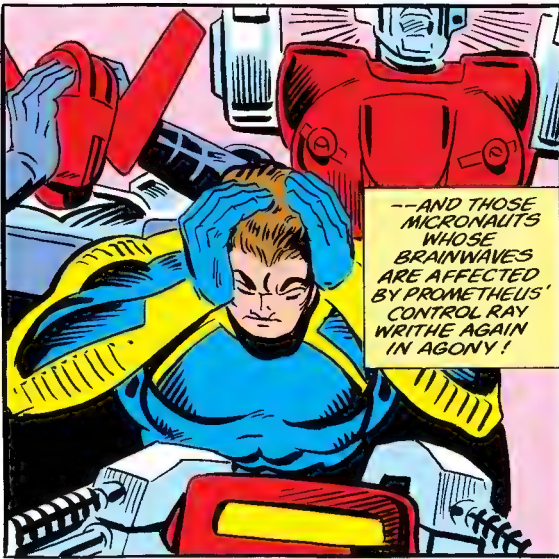


-- MAKING YOUR COMPANION MICRONAUTS DANCE TO MY TUNE WILL MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR THAT OMISSION!

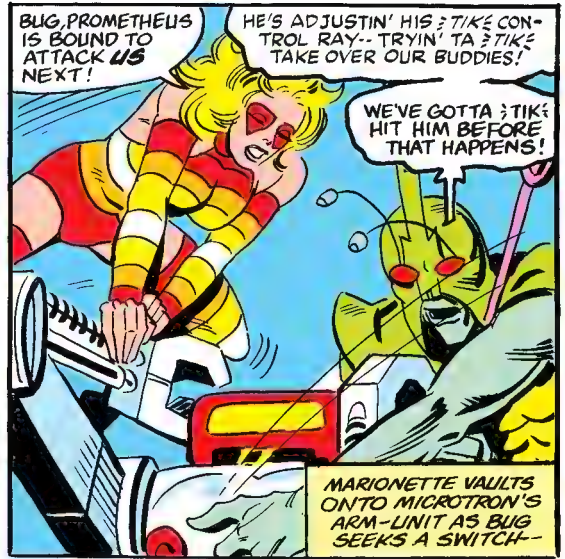
LOOKOUT, GANG! WE GOT SO ?TIK: WRAPPED UP IN HIS STORY, WE FORGOT HOW DANGEROUS HE IS!

HE'S TURNIN' HIS ?TIK: CONTROL RAY ON YOU AGAIN!

BUG'S WARNING COMES TOO LATE--



--AND THOSE MICRONAUTS WHOSE BRAINWAVES ARE AFFECTED BY PROMETHEUS' CONTROL RAY WRITHE AGAIN IN AGONY!

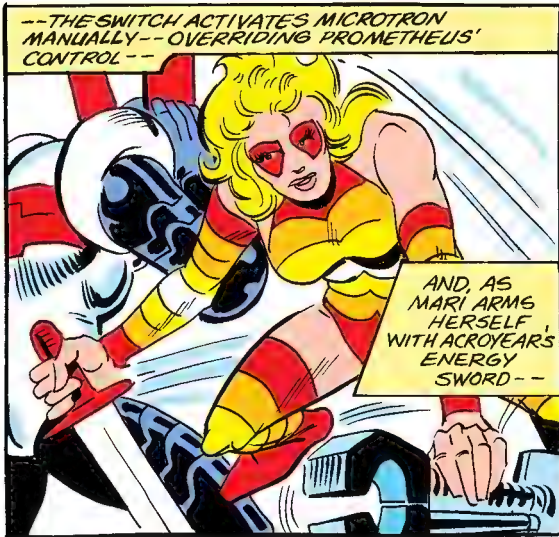


BUG, PROMETHEUS IS BOUND TO ATTACK US NEXT!

HE'S ADJUSTIN' HIS TIKÉ CONTROL RAY-- TRYIN' TA TIKÉ TAKE OVER OUR BUDDIES!

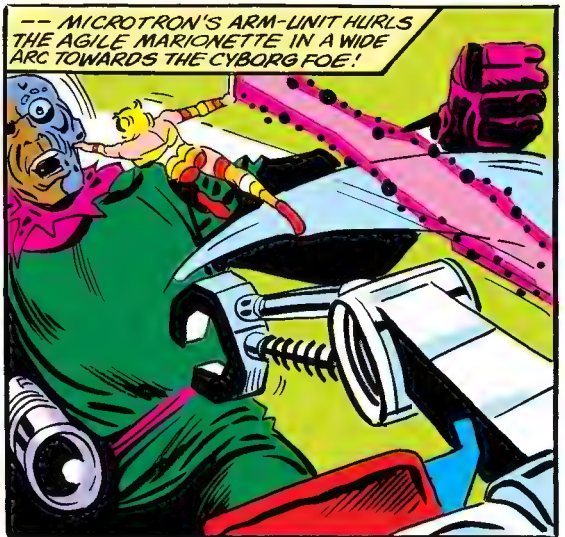
WE'VE GOTTA TIKÉ HIT HIM BEFORE THAT HAPPENS!

MARIONETTE VAULTS ONTO MICROTRON'S ARM-UNIT AS BUG SEEKS A SWITCH--



--THE SWITCH ACTIVATES MICROTRON MANUALLY-- OVERRIDING PROMETHEUS' CONTROL --

AND, AS MARI ARMS HERSELF WITH ACROYEARS' ENERGY SWORD--



-- MICROTRON'S ARM-UNIT HURLS THE AGILE MARIONETTE IN A WIDE ARC TOWARDS THE CYBORG FOE!



RELEASE OUR FRIENDS, YOU MADMAN!

TURN OFF THAT RAY!

YARRGHH! MY FACE!



THAT MADE HIM DROP HIS CONTROL RAY-- BUT I'M DROPPING AS WELL!

IT CAN'T END LIKE THIS! IT CAN'T!



YOUR COURAGEOUS ACTIONS FREED US FROM THE AGONIZING EFFECTS OF PROMETHEUS' CONTROL-RAY, MILADY.

THE LEAST I CAN DO TO REPAY YOU IS PROVIDE YOU WITH A SOFT LANDING.

MAY SEPSIS BLESS EVERY INCH OF YOUR ACROYEAR ARMOR, MY FRIEND



GOOD WORK, BIOTRON! YOU SLOWED HIM DOWN LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO GAIN THE ALTITUDE NEEDED TO BLOCK HIS PATH!

COMMANDER RANN! ASIDE, INSECT! YOUR ABILITY TO FLY CANNOT IMPEDE MY ESCAPE!



EVEN IF YOU MANAGE TO HIT ME-- A BLAST THAT WOULD STUN A NORMAL HUMAN HAS LITTLE EFFECT ON ME!

BUT THE COMMANDER AINT TRYIN' TA HIT YA, HALF-FACE! HE'S JUST HERDIN' YA TOWARDS ME AN MY TRUSTY ROCKET-LANCE!



AHEM! EXCUSE ME TEAMMATES, BUT, BEHEFT OF HIS CONTROL DEVICE---

--OUR FRENZIED FOE IS ATTEMPTING TO GET AWAY. I TRUST NOONE HAS ANY OBJECTIONS IF I LEND A HAND TO STOP HIM?

WHAT---? SOMETHING TRIPPING ME?!



NO, BUT MY LASERSONIC PISTOL IS A POWERFUL PERSUADER! ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE YOURSELF UP, OR SHALL I HAVE IT CONVINCED YOU THAT YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE?

YOU FORGET I AM A CYBORG, COMMANDER-- PART MACHINE---



BUG!

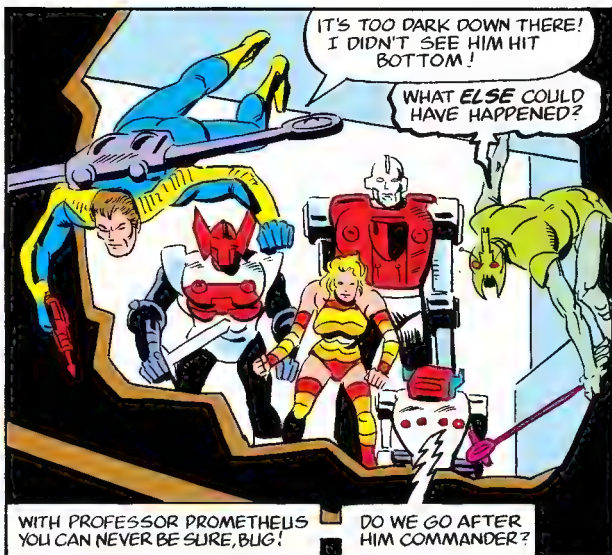
STROOM!

BUG'S WEAPON ISSUES A DEVASTATING STREAM OF FORCE---



-- SMASHING PROMETHEUS BACK THROUGH A FREIGHT ELEVATOR DOOR!

HIS SCREAMS ARE HEARD THE LENGTH OF THE SHAFT!



IT'S TOO DARK DOWN THERE! I DIDN'T SEE HIM HIT BOTTOM!

WHAT ELSE COULD HAVE HAPPENED?

WITH PROFESSOR PROMETHEUS YOU CAN NEVER BE SURE, BUG!

DO WE GO AFTER HIM COMMANDER?

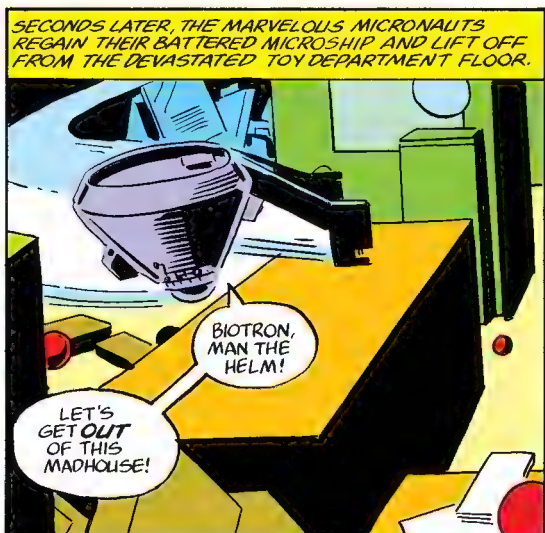


NO, MICROTRON! HIS CONTROL RAY IS SHATTERED! WITHOUT IT HE CAN'T HARM US!

BESIDES, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE EARTH AUTHORITIES SHOW UP!

WHAT ABOUT THE TOYS? CAN'T HE TRY TO USE THEM AGAIN?

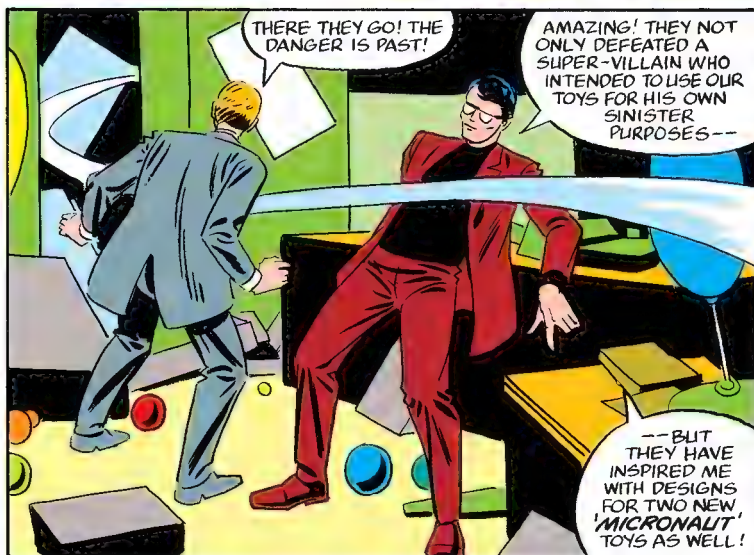
I'M SURE THE HUMANS WILL CHANGE THEIR DESIGNS TO ELIMINATE THAT POSSIBILITY, BUG!



SECONDS LATER, THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS REGAIN THEIR BATTERED MICROSHIP AND LIFT OFF FROM THE DEVASTATED TOY DEPARTMENT FLOOR.

BIOTRON, MAN THE HELM!

LET'S GET OUT OF THIS MADHOUSE!



THERE THEY GO! THE DANGER IS PAST!

AMAZING! THEY NOT ONLY DEFEATED A SUPER-VILLAIN WHO INTENDED TO USE OUR TOYS FOR HIS OWN SINISTER PURPOSES--

-- BUT THEY HAVE INSPIRED ME WITH DESIGNS FOR TWO NEW 'MICRONAUT' TOYS AS WELL!



LIH, MR. KARAMATSU...

YES, SIR?

THESE NEW 'MICRONAUTS' --DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HAVE THEM READY BY CHRISTMAS?

END

MEET
THE
MICRONAUTS

COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN

COMMANDER
ARCTURUS
RANN--
SPACE
GLIDER

THE HOMEWORLD
MICROSHIP
ENDEAVOR--
PILOTED BY COMMANDER
RANN!

BARON KARZA--
TYRANT OF THE
MICROVERSE--RANN
DEFEATED KARZA
BY WIELDING THE
ENIGMA FORCE!

LORD DALLAN RANN
& LADY SEPSIS--
RANN'S PARENTS--
RULERS OF HOMEWORLD
UNTIL SLAIN BY
BARON KARZA!

CHIEF SCIENTIST
KARZA--
RANN'S TEACHER
UNTIL HIS QUEST
FOR POWER
CORRUPTED HIM!

BIOTRON--
RANN'S HELMSMAN
AND ROBOD COMPAION!
THEIR TELEPATHIC UNION
FORMED BiotRON'S
PERSONALITY IN THE
IMAGE OF THE
COMMANDER!

SHADOW PRIESTS--
SERVANTS OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE! THEY REPRESENT
SEPARATE, PHYSICAL
EMBODIMENTS OF RANN,
CREATED BY HIS TRIP
THROUGH TIME!

TIME TRAVELER--
COMMANDER RANN'S
PERSONA MULTIPLIED
INFINITELY AND GATH-
ERED TOGETHER IN ONE
ETHEREAL ENTITY!
POSSESSED OF THE
ENIGMA FORCE, TIME
TRAVELER DWELLS IN
THE PAST, PRESENT,
AND FUTURE!

COMMANDER RANN WAS THE FIRST MICRONAUT, DISPATCHED FROM THE SUB-MOLECULAR PLANET HOMEWORLD ABOARD THE HMS ENDEAVOR, 1000 YEARS AGO! HIS MISSION: TO EXPLORE THE MICROVERSE IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION, HIS BODY ASLEEP, BUT HIS MIND AWARE THROUGH A TELEPATHIC LINKAGE WITH HIS ROBOD HELMSMAN, BIOTRON! HE RETURNED A CHANGED MAN--HAVING ENCOUNTERED THE MYSTERIOUS ENIGMA FORCE--TO A PLANET DOMINATED BY THE DIABOLICAL DICTATOR BARON KARZA! BRINGING TOGETHER A DIVERSE BAND OF REBELS, RANN LED HIS MICRONAUTS TO VICTORY AGAINST THE BARON!

MEET
THE
MICRONALITS

PRINCESS MARI... MARIONETTE

BARON KARZA SLEW DALLAN AND SERGIS RANN, THE ELECTED RULERS OF HOMEWORLD, THEN HE ESTABLISHED A FIGUREHEAD ROYAL FAMILY IN THEIR PLACE. AFTER 1000 YEARS OF HIS TYRANNICAL CONTROL, KARZA DEEMED EVEN THE FAMILY UNNECESSARY. WHEN KARZA DISPOSED OF THEIR ROYAL PARENTS, PRINCESS MARI AND HER BROTHER, PRINCE ARGON JOINED THE REBELLION AGAINST THE DICTATOR.

ARGON'S REVOLT COST HIM HIS HUMANITY-- HE WAS TRANSFORMED IN THE GENETIC ENGINEERING LABS OF KARZA'S BODY BANKS INTO A HALF-HUMAN CENTAURION!

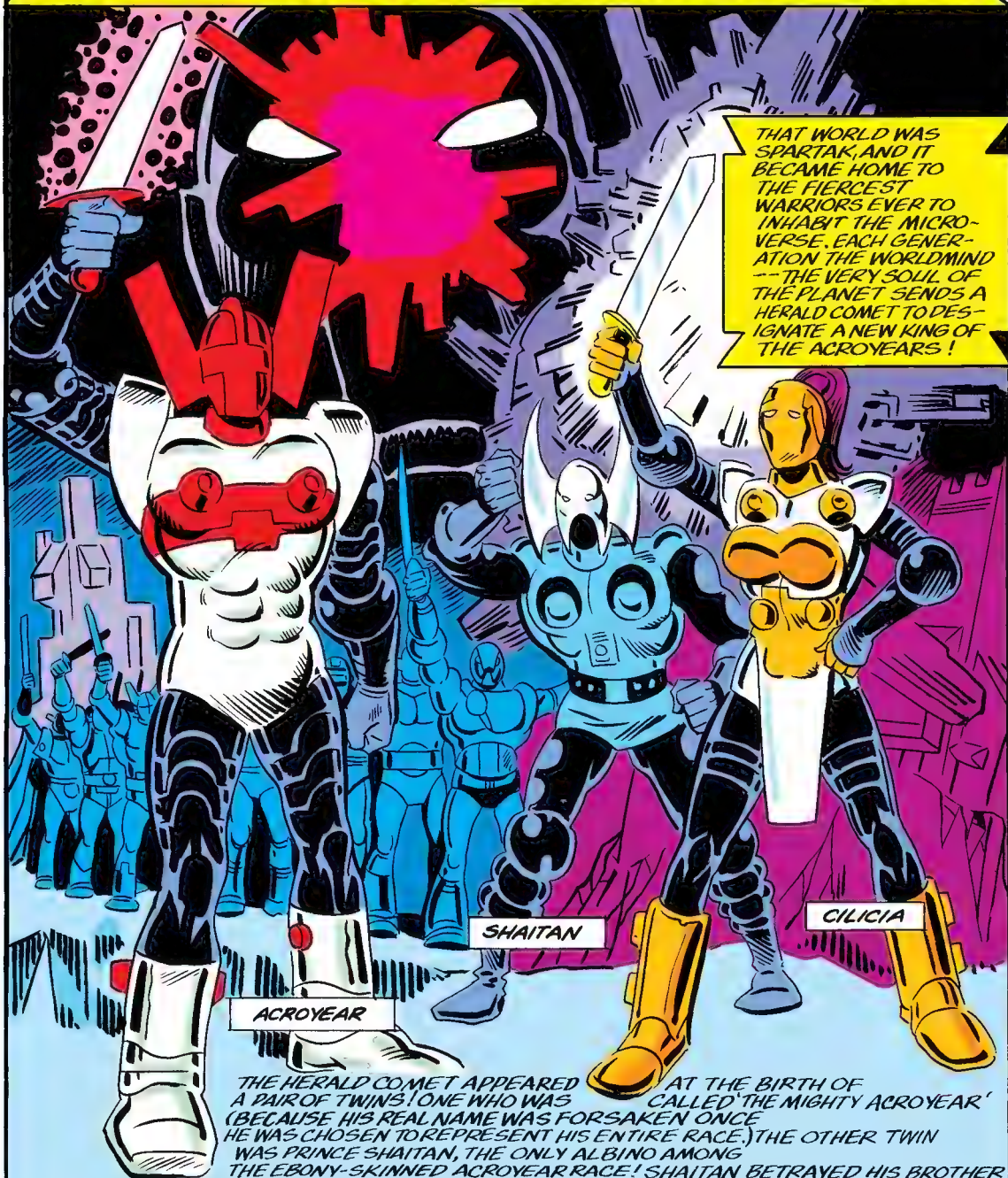
HE WAS RESCUED FROM THE BODY BANKS BY HIS FUTURE BRIDE-- THE BEAUTIFUL COMMANDER SLUG!

TAKING THE NAME MARIONETTE, PRINCESS MARI AND HER ROBOLD TUTOR AND COMPANION MICROTRON, JOINED THE MICRONALITS-- SHE LENT HER FIGHTING COURAGE AND GYMNASTIC ABILITY TO THE WAR THAT LED TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE HATED BARON KARZA... AND IN THE PROCESS FELL IN LOVE WITH COMMANDER RANN!



THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR, KING OF SPARTAK

THE LEGEND OF THE ACROYEARS: IN THE DIM PAST A RACE WAS DRIVEN FROM IT'S SUB-MICROSCOPIC HOMEWORLD, THE FLITIGIVES WANDERED FOR MILLENNIA AS EXILES AMONG THE STARS. FINALLY THEY CAME UPON A HARSH, COLD, FORBIDDING WORLD OF STONE. "WORLD, MAY WE SETTLE HERE?" THEY ASKED.



THAT WORLD WAS SPARTAK, AND IT BECAME HOME TO THE FIERCEST WARRIORS EVER TO INHABIT THE MICRO-VERSE. EACH GENERATION -- THE VERY SOUL OF THE PLANET SENDS A HERALD COMET TO DESIGNATE A NEW KING OF THE ACROYEARS!

ACROYEAR

SHAITAN

CILICIA

THE HERALD COMET APPEARED AT THE BIRTH OF A PAIR OF TWINS! ONE WHO WAS CALLED 'THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR' (BECAUSE HIS REAL NAME WAS FORSAKEN ONCE HE WAS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT HIS ENTIRE RACE.) THE OTHER TWIN WAS PRINCE SHAITAN, THE ONLY ALBINO AMONG THE EBONY-SKINNED ACROYEAR RACE! SHAITAN BETRAYED HIS BROTHER TO BARON KARZA, AND IT WAS IN KARZA'S ARENA OF DEATH THAT ACROYEAR MET AND AGREED TO JOIN THE MICRONAUTS! LATER, MERGING WITH THE WORLDMIND, ACROYEAR DROVE KARZA'S FORCES FROM SPARTAK AND AIDED THE ENIGMA FORCE IN BRINGING ABOUT KARZA'S DEFEAT! SADDENED BY A DEATH-DUEL IN WHICH HE SLEW HIS BROTHER, ACROYEAR GAVE UP HIS THRONE TO SEEK ADVENTURE WITH THE MICRONAUTS, HIS BELOVED LADY CILICIA AT HIS SIDE!

MEET
THE
MICRONAUTS

BUG

NO RACE LIVING IN THE MICROVERSE IS STRANGER THAN THE INSECTIVORIDS OF KALIKLAK! FROM THE DAY OF THEIR HATCHING IN THE GREAT NEST THEY ARE TAUGHT TO BE FIERCE AND CLINNING IN ORDER TO SURVIVE ON THIS WORLD OF CRIMSON VEGETATION!

BORN AND RAISED AMIDST BRIGANDS IN THE INFAMOUS ROBBER'S ROOST, BUG LEARNED HOW TO BE UNSCRUPULOUS FROM HIS FATHER WARTSTAFF, AND PICKED UP THE TRICK'S OF HIS THIEV'S TRADE FROM THE OLD MASTER THIEF! IT WAS THERE HE MET AND FELL IN LOVE WITH A RIVAL GANGLER, JASMINE!

BUG

JASMINE

WARTSTAFF

THE OLD
MASTER THIEF

BETRAYED BY WARTSTAFF INTO KARZA'S ARENA OF DEATH, BUG JOINED THE MICRONAUTS AND ESCAPED--- RETURNING TO KALIKLAK TO SEIZE CONTROL OF ROBBER'S ROOST FROM HIS FATHER AND LEAD HIS MERRY CUTPURSES AGAINST KARZA'S COLONIAL GOVERNOR CHOOSING TO REJOIN THE MICRONAUTS, BUG LOST HIS BELOVED JASMINE IN A BATTLE WITH THE SINISTER PSYCO-MAN!

A
MICRONAUTS
BONUS
PAGE

FRIENDS AND FOES OF THE MICRONAUTS!

CAPTAIN
UNIVERSE
MICROS #8

THE FANTASTIC FOUR
MICROS # 15-17

RAY & STEVE COFFIN
AND MUFFIN
MICROS # 2-12

THE MACABRE
MAN-THING
MICROS # 7

THE ASTONISHING
ANT-MAN
MICROS # 19 & 20

PROFESSOR
PROMETHEUS
MICROS # 4-8

THE TERRIBLE
TOYMASTER
MICROS ANNUAL
#2

THE SINISTER
PSYCO-MAN
MICROS # 15-17

PLANT-
MAN
MICROS
#21

THE BEST DARNED
BURGLAR IN THE
WHOLE WIDEWORLD
MICROS # 22

50¢
CC

25
JAN
02714

MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

MENTALLO! THE FIXER! AND THE
HORROR CALLED... **DEATHBIRTH!**



Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK * ARMANDO GIL * JOE ROSEN, LETTERS * LOUISE JONES * JIM SHOOTER
WRITER-STORYTELLER-ARTIST INKER B. SHAREN COLORS EDITOR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TO SAVE THEIR
MICROVERSE--

DEATHBIRTH!

COMMANDER
RANN

MARIONETTE
MICROTRON

BIOTRON

BUG

ACROYEAR

CILICIA

-- MAY FIRST
HAVE TO SAVE
OUR EARTH!

I RIGGED UP THE MENTA-
SCOPE SO YOU COULD TELE-
PATHICALLY TRACK AND BRAIN-
BLAST OUR ENEMIES, MENTALLO--
YET YOU'VE LET THE MICRONAUTS'
DESTRUCTION OF COMPUTREX *
GO UNAVENGED!

COMPUTREX
HAD ALREADY
OUTLIVED THE
PURPOSE FOR
WHICH YOU
ENGINEERED
HIM, FIXER.

* SEE
LAST ISH
-- LOUISE.

THE DATA THE
LIVING COMPUTER STOLE
FROM OTHER SOURCES
BEFORE HIS SHUTDOWN
HINTED AT THE EXISTENCE OF A
SUBATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM. HIS
DESTRUCTION BY DENIZENS OF
THAT VERY MICROVERSE
CONFIRMED IT.

I THINK OUR *MASTERS*
WOULD BE IMPRESSED WERE
WE TO BRING THEM *LIVING*
PROOF, DON'T YOU?

UNAWARE THAT THE MALEVOLENT MIND OF MENTALLO IS SEEKING AFTER THEM, THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS FLY THE SKIES OF EARTH IN SEARCH OF...

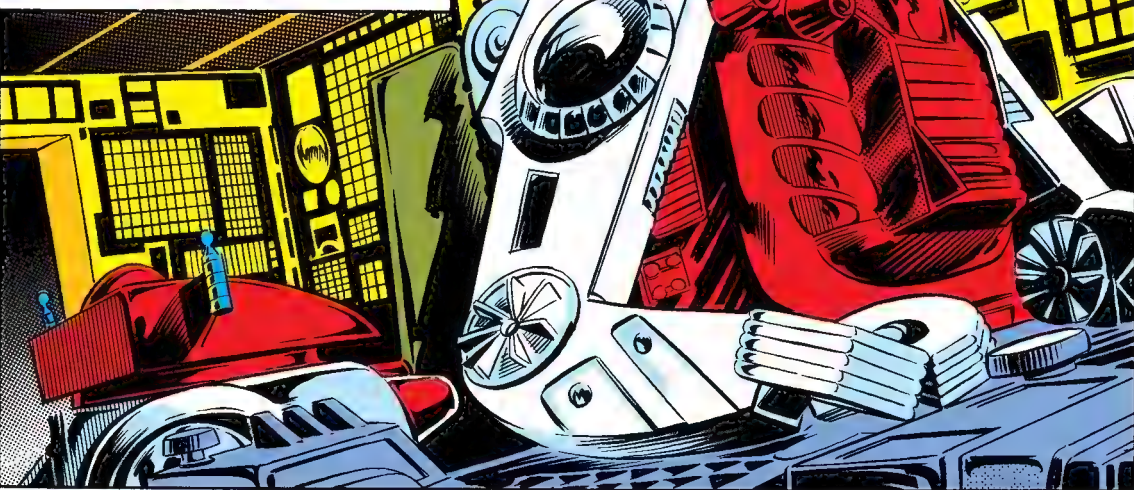
WHAT, BIOTRON??

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR ON THIS WORLD OF GIANTS???

ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HOMELAND MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR, THE HELMSMAN--A 6000 SERIES ROBOD CALLED BIOTRON--ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE FACTS OF LIFE TO MICROTRON, HIS TINY TEAMMATE.

ALTHOUGH I SHARE A MIND-LINK WITH COMMANDER RANN--FORGED DURING OUR THOUSAND YEAR SOJOURN THROUGH SPACE--WHICH ENABLES ME TO KNOW WHAT HE KNOWS AND FEEL WHAT HE FEELS...

...I AM NOT SURE I CAN EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT IT IS THAT DRIVES A MAN INTO CONSTANT QUEST OF ADVENTURE.



BUT I HAVE STUDIED HUMAN NATURE. I KNOW THAT DESPITE THEIR COURAGE, OUR COMRADES ARE PLAGUED BY FEARS AND SELF-DOUBTS. KING ACROYEAR AND PRINCESS MARI, FOR INSTANCE, FEAR THE BURDENS OF THEIR ROYAL LINEAGE.

CILICIA IS AFRAID THAT VOYAGING WITH US WILL MAKE HER MORE HUMAN AND LESS THE ACROYEAR WARRIOR-MAIDEN.

BUG IS AFRAID OF MANY THINGS. HE HIDES HIS FEARS BEHIND A MASK OF MIRTH.

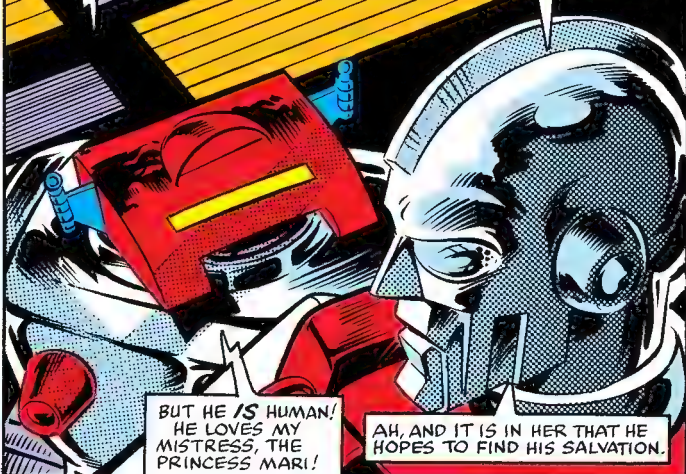
COMMANDER RANN IS PERHAPS THE MOST COMPLEX. HE HAS SEEN TEN CENTURIES COME AND GO, HIS BODY IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION WHILE HIS MIND EXPERIENCED ALL--EVENTUALLY GIVING BIRTH TO THE AWESOME ENIGMA FORCE.

YOU MEAN, THE TIME TRAVELERS?

YES. THEY AND THE COMMANDER ARE ONE. TO DEFEAT BARON KARZA, HE HAD TO SUMMON THEM FROM THE DIM RECESSES OF HIS SUB-CONSCIOUS. NOW HE IS AFRAID THAT, HAVING KNOWN WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE A GOD, HE MAY NEVER TRULY BE HUMAN AGAIN.

BUT HE IS HUMAN! HE LOVES MY MISTRESS, THE PRINCESS MARI!

AH, AND IT IS IN HER THAT HE HOPES TO FIND HIS SALVATION.



ELSEWHERE IN
THE ENDEAVOR...

MY LADY CILICIA.

MY LORD
ACROYEAR.

IT IS THE
TIME OF
BONDING.

BUT NOT THE PLACE, BE-
LOVED. DO YOU FORGET
THE PACT WE MADE WITH
OUR PLANET?

NO, I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN. WHEN
OUR WANDERING RACE SOUGHT SHELTER
AMONGST THE STARS, ONE WORLD OFFERED
US SANCTUARY.

SPARTAK--
CRADLE OF THE
ACROYEAR
RACE.

AS KING, YOU
ARE SWORN
ONLY TO BOND
IN OUR WORLD'S
DEFENSE.

I WISH TO LIVE FREE
OF SPARTAK'S STERN
SHADOW--TO LOVE
FOR LOVE'S SAKE,
AND NOT MERELY TO
PROPAGATE OUR
SPECIES.

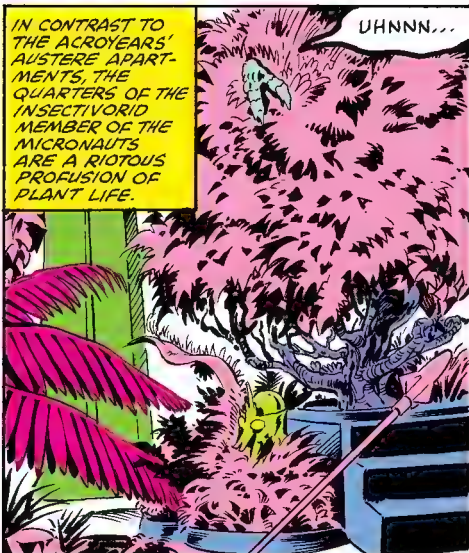
WE ACROYEARS
HAVE MANY
ENEMIES. THE RACE
MUST SURVIVE.

SO MUST I,
CILICIA-- AS
A WARRIOR...
AND AS A
MAN.

THE MICRONAUTS
HAVE TAUGHT ME
THAT THERE IS
MORE TO LIVING
THAN DYING IN
BATTLE.

LET US
BOND,
BELOVED--

--AND, FOR A
TIME, SET
THOUGHTS
OF WAR
ASIDE.



IN CONTRAST TO THE ACROYEARS' AUSTERE APARTMENTS, THE QUARTERS OF THE INSECTIVORID MEMBER OF THE MICRONAUTS ARE A RIOTOUS PROFUSION OF PLANT LIFE.

UHNNN...



HAVING SET ASIDE HIS BATTLE-ARMOR THAT HE MIGHT SURRENDER TO SLEEP, BUG TOSSES AND TURNS IN HIS LEAFY BOWER.

...NNNNN
TICKS!

AWAKE, THIS ONCE-MASTER THIEF FROM KALIKLAK WOULD HURL HIMSELF JOKING INTO A BARRAGE OF LETHAL LASER-FIRE.



ASLEEP, HIS FACADE OF FRIVOLITY IS NO DEFENSE AGAINST HIS FEARS AND FAILURES.

~ T-TIK ~
JASMINE!!

HE LOVED HER AND HE LOST HER. HE HAS NEVER FORGIVEN HIMSELF.

HER DEATH GIVES HIS LAUGHTER A BITTER EDGE.

WHILE NEARBY, SHEATHED IN HEALING BANDAGES, COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN RESTS FROM HIS WOUNDS.



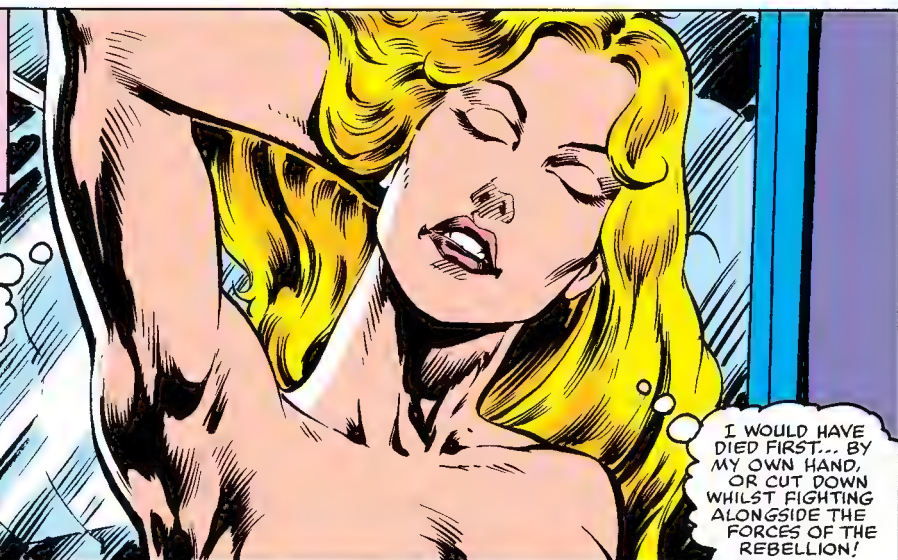
HE SLEEPS EASY, KNOWING HE HAS SAVED HIS SHIP, HIS CREW--

--AND THE WOMAN HE LOVES FROM THE DEADLY DESTRUCTION UNLEASHED ON THEM BY THE SINISTER CIRCUITRY OF COMPUTREX... THE LIVING COMPUTER.

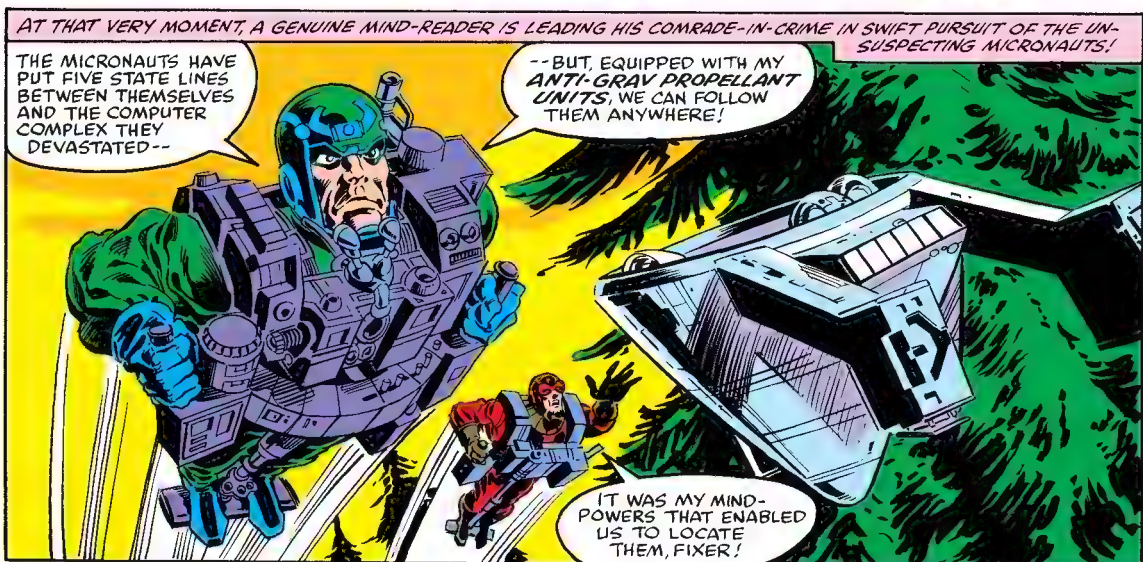
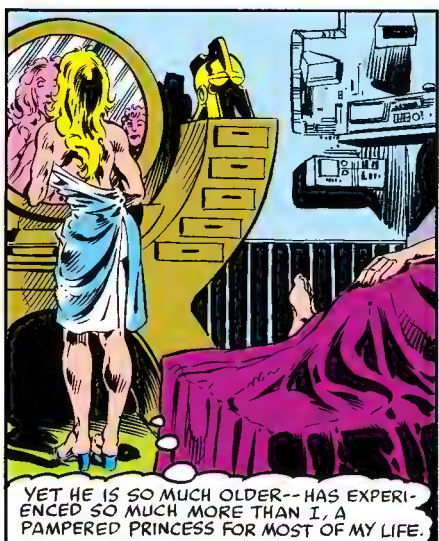
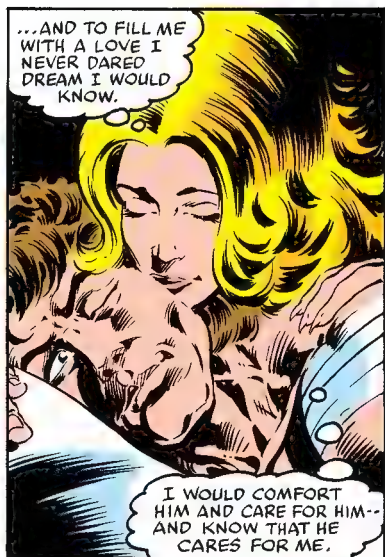
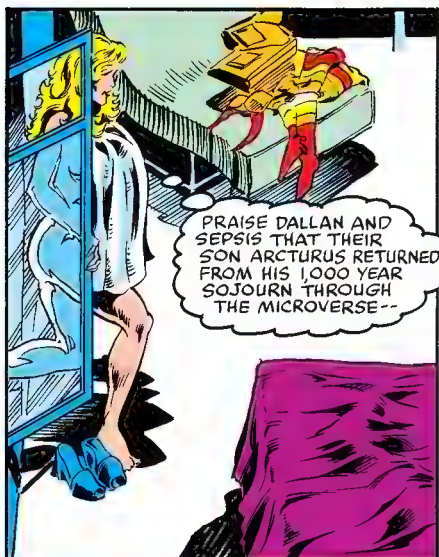
CLEANSED AND RE-FRESHED UNDER A STREAM OF REVITALIZING RAYS, THE PROUD PRINCESS OF A SUB-ATOMIC PLANET CALLED HOMEWORLD REFLECTS UPON HER AND THE COMMANDER'S RELATIONSHIP.

I LOVE ARCTURUS. BEFORE I MET HIM, I THOUGHT MYSELF DOOMED TO SOME MEANINGLESS ROYAL MARRIAGE FORCED UPON MY FATHER, THE KING, BY HOMEWORLD'S REAL RULER... BARON KARZA...

OR, PERHAPS, CONDEMNED TO AN UNHOLY UNION WITH KARZA HIMSELF!



I WOULD HAVE DIED FIRST... BY MY OWN HAND, OR CUT DOWN WHILST FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE FORCES OF THE REBELLION!





YOUR ABILITY TO READ MINDS DIDN'T GET US OUT OF THAT MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON S.H.I.E.L.D.*HAD US IN, MENTALLO-- OUR MASTERS DID!

* SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION-- (WHEW!) LOUISE.



SO QUIT PATTING YOURSELF ON THE BACK AND KEEP YOUR THOUGHT-SCREENS UP!

WE DON'T WANT OUR LITTLE RABBITS TO KNOW THEY'VE GOT A FOX ON THEIR TAIL ...UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!



INSIDE THE H.M.S ENDEAVOR...

ARCTURUS, A LITTLE WHILE AGO I WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU, AND...

AND I READ YOUR MIND.

IT SEEMS THE MIND-LINK THAT ENABLES ME TO COMMUNICATE TELEPATHICALLY WITH BIOTRON--



--IS EXTENDING ITSELF TO PROBE THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS. IT'S BEEN HAPPENING MORE AND MORE OFTEN LATELY.

I DON'T KNOW-- MARI, WE'RE IN DANGER!

MARIONETTE DOES NOT DOUBT HER LOVER FOR AN INSTANT!



BIOTRON KNOWS! HE'S SENSED IT TOO!

I'LL ALERT THE ACROYEARS!



BUG! GET YOURSELF IN GEAR!

THAT'S AN ORDER!



HUH? TIKÉ WHAT? ANYONE EVER TELL YOU, COMMANDER, THAT WE'RE ALL VOLUNTEERS ON THIS CRATE?!

BUT ROUSE HIMSELF FOR BATTLE THE FEISTY INSECTIVORID DOES!



OUTSIDE, THE ATTACK ON THE ENDEAVOR BEGINS!

FIXER, THEY'RE ON TO US! THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE!

PEWOOM

FAT LOT OF GOOD YOUR MIND-POWERS DO WHEN THE PRESSURE'S ON, MENTALLO! BUT THE FIXER DOESN'T FOLD!

HURTLING FROM THE FIXER'S BACKPACK LAUNCHER, THE PROJECTILE GAINS ON THE ENDEAVOR!



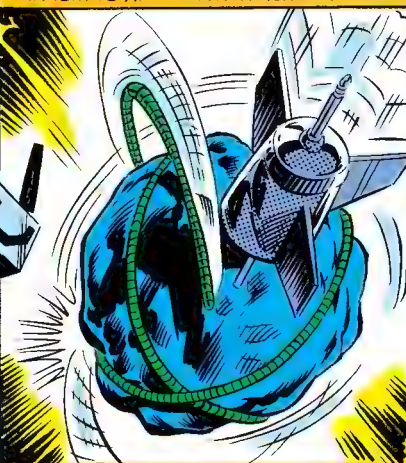
WHEN SENSORS INDICATE THAT IT IS NEARLY UPON ITS PREY, ITS SECOND STAGE DISENGAGES--

--ENCASING THE ENDEAVOR IN AN ALL-ENVELOPING SHROUD!



MAGNETOLOCK YOURSELF TO THE DECK, MICROTRON. I FEAR WE ARE IN FOR A ROUGH RIDE.

BESIDES BLOCKING VISION, THE SHROUD TRANSMITS AN ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD!



AT ONCE THE ENDEAVOR'S SYSTEMS GO HAYWIRE!



HEY! KNOCK IT STIKE OFF! I'M LOSIN' MY LUNCH!

FIGHTING TO RETAIN THEIR BALANCE, RANN AND MARIONETTE RIDE A JET OF COMPRESSED AIR UP THE ENDEAVOR'S MAIN ACCESS TUBE!



DID YOU ALERT THE ACROYEARS?

THEY HAD A PRIVASEAL ON THEIR DOOR-- IT CAN ONLY BE OVERRIDDEN FROM THE BRIDGE!

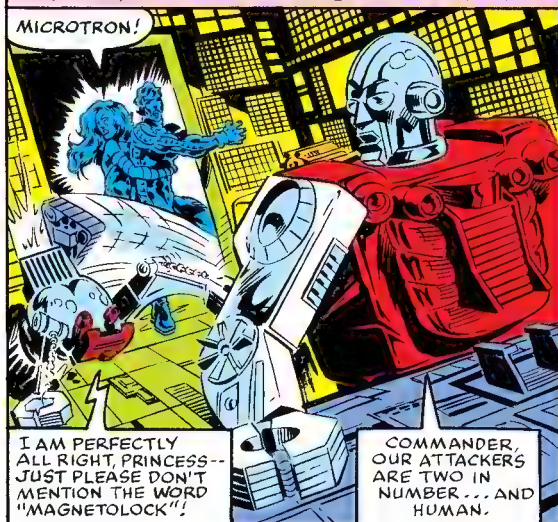
WELL, I'M SURE THEY SUSPECT SOMETHING'S WRONG BY NOW!



ACROYEAR-- WE MUST BE UNDER ATTACK!

SOUL OF SPARTAK, IS THERE NEVER TO BE A MOMENT'S SURCEASE FROM STRUGGLE?

MEANWHILE, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE BOUNDING MICROSHIP...



MICROTRON!

I AM PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT, PRINCESS-- JUST PLEASE DON'T MENTION THE WORD "MAGNETOLOCK"!!

COMMANDER, OUR ATTACKERS ARE TWO IN NUMBER... AND HUMAN.

I KNOW. THEY CALL THEMSELVES MENTALLO AND THE FIXER. I CAN'T DETERMINE WHAT IT IS THEY WANT OF US!

COMMANDER, HOW IS IT WE CAN TELEPATHICALLY SENSE THEM AT ALL?



I THINK, PERHAPS, THAT THE ENIGMA FORCE IS WITH ME AGAIN.

BUT THAT WOULD MEAN...

MENTALLY ADMONISHING BIOTRON TO SILENCE LEST THEIR UNVOICED ANXIETY ALARM THEIR FELLOW MICRONAUTS, COMMANDER RANN PREPARES FOR THE DEFENSE OF HIS SHIP!



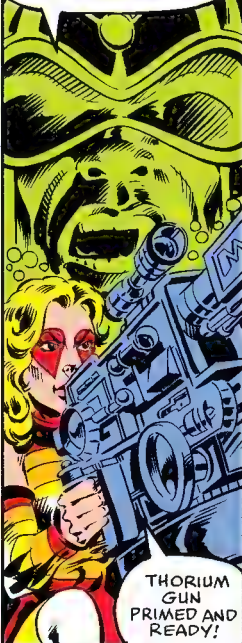
FIXER! TWO OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE ARE TELE-PATHIC-- LIKE ME! THEY'VE THROWN UP IMPENETRABLE THOUGHT-SCREENS OF THEIR OWN!

CONCENTRATE ON THE OTHERS! YOUR VALUE TO ME AND TO OUR MASTERS LIES IN YOUR ABILITY TO ANTICIPATE THE ACTIONS OF OUR ENEMIES IN TIME FOR ME TO COUNTER THEM!

FAIL...AND YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN AN OVER-RATED INCOMPETENT!

NO! S.H.I.E.L.D. SAID I WAS USELESS, TOO-- THAT'S WHY THEY THREW ME OUT!

BUT I'M NOT! I CAN SENSE THAT THE MICRO-NAUTS ARE ABOUT TO BLAST OUT OF YOUR SCRAMBLE-SHROUD!



THORIUM GUN PRIMED AND READY!

THEN PUNCH A HOLE IN WHATEVER'S CONTAINING US, MARI!



AS GOOD AS DONE, ARCTURUS!

FWEET!

NO SOONER DOES THE SHATTERED SCRAMBLE-SHROUD FALL AWAY THAN TWO MIGHTY--IF MINUTE--FIGURES LAUNCH THEMSELVES FROM THE ENDEAVOR'S UPPER DECK!



ARE YOU READY, MY LADY CILICIA?

FOR BATTLE, MY LORD ACROYEAR? ALWAYS!

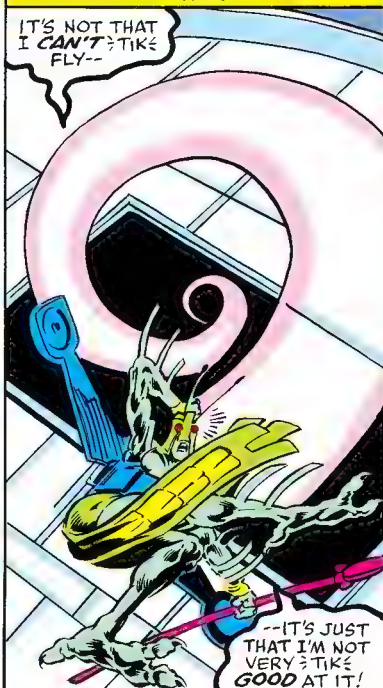
BUG! THE ACROYEARS' MORE POWERFUL GLIDER-PACKS HAVE GIVEN THEM THE JUMP ON US, BUT WE CAN'T LET THEM FACE THE FOE ALONE!



GET YOUR GLIDER-WINGS ON AND FOLLOW ME!

WHY COULDN'T ACROYEAR HAVE $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ WAITED TILL WE WERE ON THE $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ GROUND TO ATTACK $\ni$!

ON SUB-MICROSCOPIC KALIKLAK, TWO TYPES OF INSECTIVORIDS EVOLVED-- THOSE WHO FLY, AND THOSE WHO DON'T! BUG, FIRMLY OF THE LATTER GENUS, WILL TAKE TO THE AIR ONLY WHEN AIDED MECHANICALLY... AND ONLY WHEN THE WELFARE OF A TEAMMATE FORCES HIM TO!



IT'S NOT THAT I CAN'T $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ FLY--

--IT'S JUST THAT I'M NOT VERY $\ni$ TIK $\ni$ GOOD AT IT!

FIXER--THE ACRO-YEARS' THOUGHTS REVEAL THAT THEIR ENERGY SWORDS CAN SLICE THROUGH STEEL OR BOIL OUR BLOOD IN OUR VEINS!

NOW YOU ARE EARNING YOUR KEEP, MENTALLO!

IF I KNOW THE POWER OF OUR ADVERSARIES, I CAN PREPARE TO MEET THEM...WITH MY MODIFIED JERICO TUBES!

AS JOSHUA BLEW DOWN THE WALLS OF JERICO--

--SO WILL I BLOW AWAY THESE TINY TITANS!

MAGNIFIED BY THE JERICO TUBES, THE FIXER'S BELLOW ATTAINS A DEAFENING SONIC PITCH--

ARRRRHHH

--SMASHING AT THE STUNNED ACROYEARS LIKE A THUNDERCLAP!

MENTALLO, MEANWHILE, ENCOUNTERS COMMANDER RANN...

YOU ARE THE ONE WHOSE PSI-ABILITIES I SENSED! THEY ARE STRONG--

THE COMMANDER REELS AS MENTALLO SAVAGELY--PSYCHICALLY--ASSAULTS HIS MIND!

--BUT NOT AS STRONG AS MY MIND-MELD!

HE KNOWS! THE HUMAN KNOWS!!

I TAKE OUT TWO OF OUR OPPONENTS WHILE MENTALLO HAS HIS HANDS FULL WITH ONE! I DON'T NEED HIM!

THE FIXER DOESN'T NEED ANYONE...EXCEPT THE MASTERS!

PRINCESS!

I SEE THEM, BIOTRON! OUR ATTACKER'S SHOOTING SOME KIND OF SPHERES AT US!

ONE OF THEM'S ADHERED TO THE TURRET--ITS FORCE-FIELD TURNING MY THORIUM BLASTS BACK UPON ME!

SHKROW

EXECUTING AN INTRIGUING AERIAL MANEUVER, BUG SWOOPS DOWN ON MENTALLO!

YAAA STIKS RRRHH!

GOTCHA!

SHSKROW

ON EARTH OR IN THE MICRO-VERSE, THE SOUND OF A STINGING ROCKET-LANCE IS UNIQUE!

ARRGH! MY FACE!!

THAT SHOULD TIK STOP HIM FROM DOIN' WHATEVER HE WAS TIK DOIN' TO YA, COMMANDER!

THAT DEVICE HE'S WEARING IS SOME KIND OF FLIGHT-PACK, BUG! SHATTER IT AND METALLO WILL FALL TO EARTH!

O TIK KAY!

SHSKROW!

F-FIXER, HELP ME!

THE MALEVOLENT MIND-READER PLUNGES--

--COLLIDES WITH THE ENDEAVOR, AND GRABS FOR IT, IN THE DESPERATE HOPE THAT IT WILL KEEP HIM ALOFT!

THE MICROSHIP'S ENGINES CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR THE SUDDEN WEIGHT OVERLOAD!

FIXER!

THEY WHINE AND GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE!

JOE RENTALS

SKRASH

THE SKYLIGHT OF LARRY'S LANES CAVES IN, ADMITTING SOME RATHER UNUSUAL BOWLERS!

AS THE PATRONS OF THIS PALACE OF PLAY SCATTER, THE FIXER DESCENDS AFTER HIS PARTNER!

SO, MY FIRST TWO FOES HAVE RECOVERED?!

MY MASTERS WILL MOST LIKELY WANT YOU ALIVE-- BUT THEY CAN'T HOLD ME ACCOUNTABLE FOR JUSTIFIABLE DAMAGE!

ZZZZZ

THE FIXER'S DEVICE ALTERS THE ATOMIC STRUCTURE OF A NEARBY BOWLING BALL, CREATING A CRYSTALLINE SPHERE!

CILICIA, WE ARE BEING DRAWN INSIDE THE CRYSTAL GLOBE.

LIKE ALL THE WEAPONRY I DEVISE, THE **SHATTER-SPHERE** HAS SOME INTERESTING AND DEADLY PROPERTIES!

WHEN IT SHATTERS, THE SHOCK IS TRANSMITTED TO WHATEVER OR WHOEVER HAPPENS TO BE CONTAINED INSIDE!

ACROYEAR--

I HEARD, MILADY. IT WOULD SEEM THAT OUR SALVATION LIES IN NOT REMAINING WITHIN THE CRYSTAL WHEN IT STRIKES ITS TARGET.

STRIKE, FAIR CILICIA, THOUGH OUR VERY BLOWS AGAINST THE CRYSTAL BE TRANSMITTED BACK AT US, IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO FREEDOM.

THE ACROYEARS HAVE ESCAPED THE FIXER'S TRAP BUT, WITH MENTALLO READING THEIR MINDS--

--IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE MICRONAUTS' EVERY MOVE IS ANTICIPATED AND THEY GO DOWN TO DEFEAT!

BUT I'VE GOT A PLAN! BIOTRON!

YOU HAVE DROPPED OUR THOUGHT-SCREEN TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME TELEPATHICALLY, SIR?

MENTALLO WILL BE ABLE TO EAVESDROP.

I WANT HIM TO "HEAR" OUR THOUGHTS--NOT THAT HE'LL UNDERSTAND THEM!

BIOTRON, YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD!

BIOTRON INSTANTLY PUTS RANN'S PLAN INTO EFFECT!

YOU AGAIN-- THE TELEPATH! NOW I CAN READ YOUR MIND AGAIN!

B-BUT WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

उभोध, वहंसदरओस-- ठस फावरुन धदुडक!

A LANGUAGE I CAN'T UNDERSTA... MY HELMET-- SNATCHED OFF MY HEAD!?!?

LEAVE HIM TO ME NOW BIOTRON

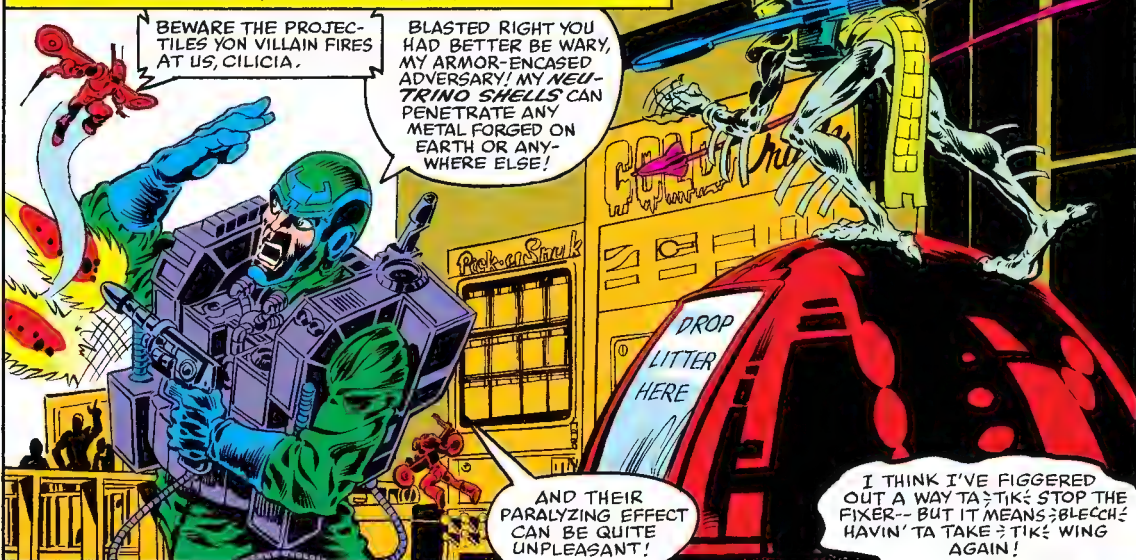
I-I CAUGHT THAT THOUGHT! WH-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ?!

GIVE YOU A TASTE OF YOUR OWN MEDICINE, MENTALLO! YOU'RE AN ESPER-SENSITIVE-- WITHOUT YOUR HELMET FILTERING OUT UNWANTED THOUGHTS, YOU'RE WIDE OPEN TO A MENTAL BARRAGE!

SUCH AS THE ONE BIOTRON AND I PLANNED, SHIELDING OUR INTENTIONS FROM YOU BY TELEPATHICALLY CONVERSING IN A LANGUAGE UNKNOWN TO YOU-- HOMEWORLD'S!

TO TRANSLATE COMMANDER RANN'S "THOUGHT," SEE THIS ISSUE'S LETTERS PAGE--LOUISE.

MEANWHILE, UNDAUNTED BY THE FIXER'S SEEMINGLY INEXHAUSTIBLE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS, THE DIMINUTIVE DUO FROM SPARTAK LAUNCH THEMSELVES AT THEIR FOE AGAIN!



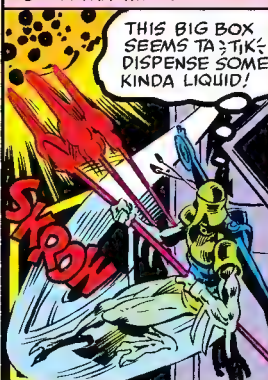
BEWARE THE PROJECTILES YON VILLAIN FIRES AT US, CILICIA.

BLASTED RIGHT YOU HAD BETTER BE WARY, MY ARMOR-ENCASED ADVERSARY! MY **NEUTRINO SHELLS** CAN PENETRATE ANY METAL FORGED ON EARTH OR ANYWHERE ELSE!

AND THEIR PARALYZING EFFECT CAN BE QUITE UNPLEASANT!

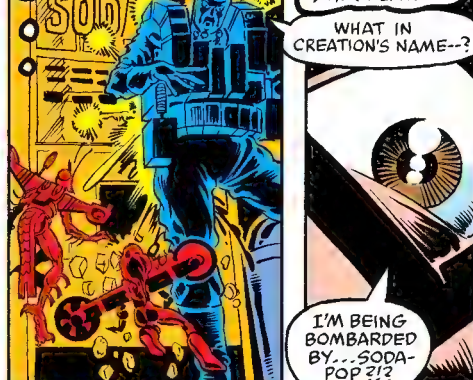
I THINK I'VE FIGGERED OUT A WAY TA-TIK- STOP THE FIXER-- BUT IT MEANS-BLECCH- HAVIN' TA TAKE-TIK- WING AGAIN!

LEAVING HIS PERCH ON THE TRASH RECEPTACLE, BUG GLIDES TOWARD A NEARBY SODA MACHINE!



THIS BIG BOX SEEMS TA-TIK- DISPENSE SOME KINDA LIQUID!

I GOT ME A-TIK- FEELIN' THAT WATCHIN' WHAT IT DOES WHEN IT HITS THE FIXER'S WEAPONS-PACK IS GONNA BE REAL-TIK- NEAT!



WHAT IN CREATION'S NAME--?

I'M BEING BOMBARDED BY...SODA-POP??!

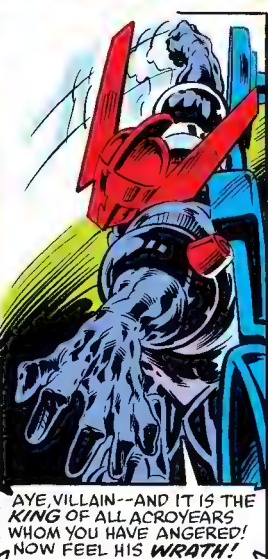
THE BLASTED SODA'S SEEPIN' INTO MY WEAPONS-PACK-- SHORT-CIRCUITING IT--RENDERING ALL MY DEVICES...



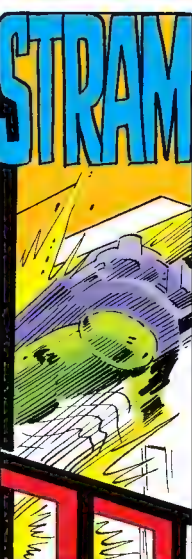
...INOPERABLE!



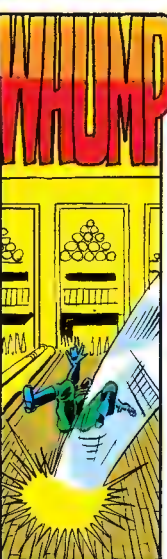
OH NO! THE ACRO-YEARS!



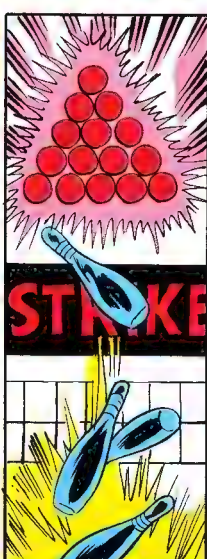
AYE, VILLAIN--AND IT IS THE **KING OF ALL ACROYEARS** WHOM YOU HAVE ANGERED! NOW FEEL HIS **WRATH**!



STRAM

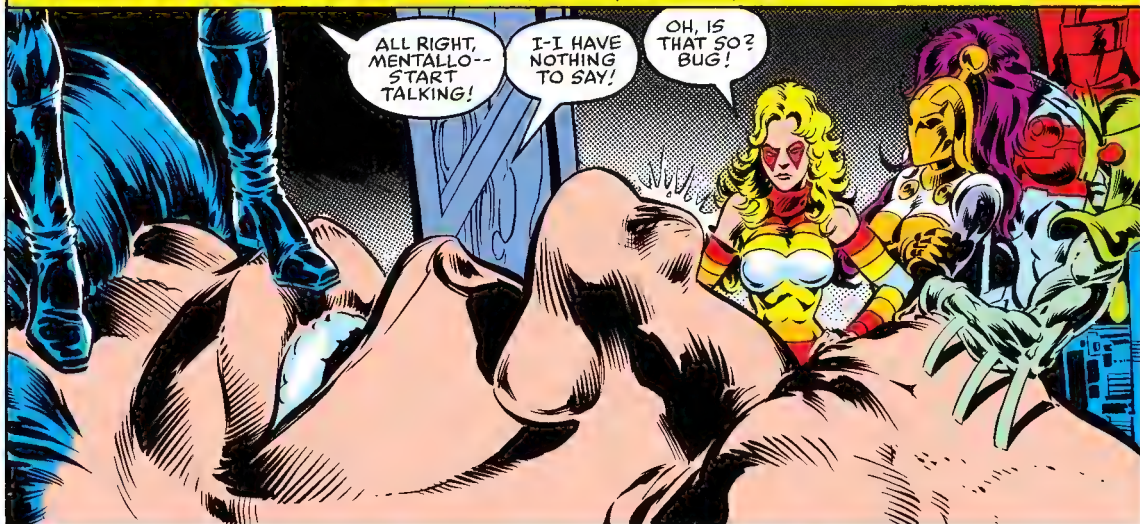


WHUMP



STRIKE

REALIZING HE WILL BE UNABLE TO CALL ON THE FIXER FOR HELP, MENTALLO FACES THE TRIUMPHANT MICRONAUTS!



ALL RIGHT, MENTALLO-- START TALKING!

I-I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY!

OH, IS THAT SO? BUG!

REMEMBER WHAT MY OL' ROCKET-LANCE DID TA YER 'TIL K- FACE BEFORE, HUMAN? HOW'D YA LIKE TA 'TIL K- GO THROUGH THE REST OF YER LIFE *NOSELESS*?

EASE OFF, BUG! MENTALLO'S NOT GOING TO GIVE US ANY INFORMATION-- AT LEAST NOT WILLINGLY!

HE'S SCARED OF SOMETHING HE KEEPS THINKING OF AS HIS "MASTERS"!

BUT HIS AND THE FIXER'S ATTACK ON US-- AND OUR BATTLE YESTERDAY WITH COMPUTREX-- ARE ALL SOMEHOW INTER-RELATED!



I INTEND TO FIND OUT HOW!

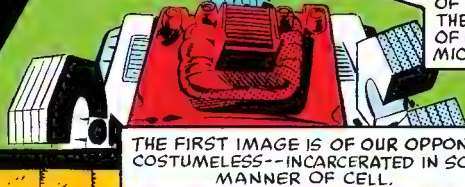
NOT FULLY UNDERSTANDING FROM WHENCE COMES HIS NEWFOUND TELEPATHIC TALENTS, COMMANDER RANN NONETHELESS UTILIZES THEM TO PROBE THE MIND OF MENTALLO!

COMMUNICATE THE VILLAIN'S THOUGHTS TO ME, SIR--

--AND I WILL PROJECT VISUALIZATIONS OF THEM FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR FELLOW MICRONAUTS.



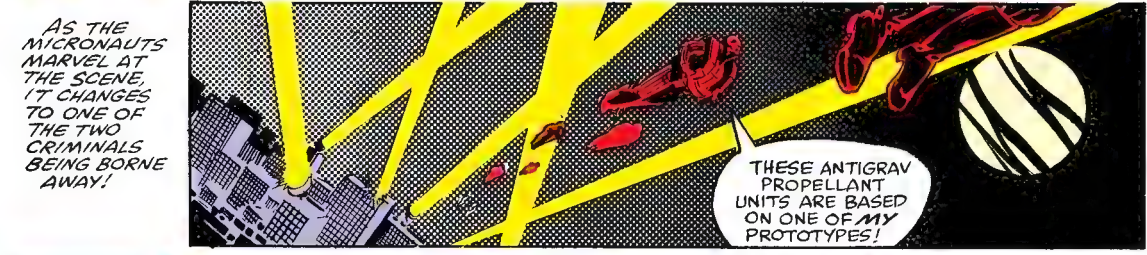
NO! STAY OUT OF MY HEAD! STAY OUT!



THE FIRST IMAGE IS OF OUR OPPONENTS-- COSTUMELESS-- INCARCERATED IN SOME MANNER OF CELL.

THIS S.H.I.E.L.D. LOCKUP NEGATES MY MIND-POWERS, FIXER!

AND I'VE NOTHING OUT OF WHICH TO DEVISE AN ESCAPE WEAPON, MENTALLO!



NOW YOU
ARE SHOWING
US A TOP
SECRET AREA
INSIDE THE
HELICARRIER!

I RECOGNIZE IT! I USED
TO WORK THERE, UNTIL
S.H.I.E.L.D. DISCOVERED
AND ABORTED MY ATTEMPT
TO USE MY MIND-POWERS
TO TAKE CONTROL!

IT IS THE **ESPER**
UNIT-- ONE OF THE MOST
ADVANCED RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS
DEVOTED SOLELY TO EXTRA-
SENSORY PERCEPTION
IN THE WORLD!

YOU WANT
ME TO READ
THE MINDS OF THE
S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPERS
WITHOUT THEIR
BEING AWARE OF
IT? VERY WELL!

I CAN SENSE THAT
THEY ARE ENGAGED
IN A NEW, ULTRASECRET
PROJECT-- PROBING
SOME HIDDEN, SUB-
ATOMIC REALM! THEY
ARE... **AFRAID!**

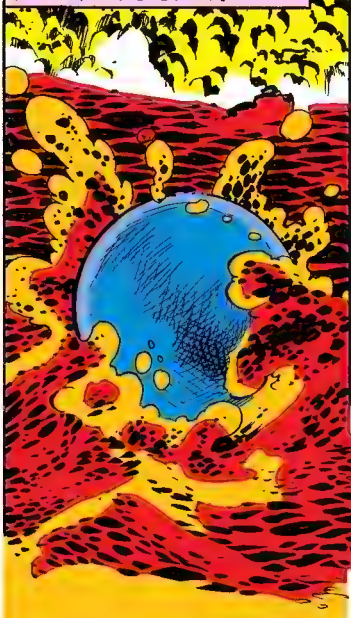
"SOMETHING
AWESOME--
EVIL!"
MENTALLO
GASPS IN
REPLY, "A
POWER IN THE
MICROVERSE
REACHING OUT,
TOUCHING
THEIR MINDS--

"--CONTROLLING
THE **ESPER**
UNIT FROM
WITHIN!"

"AFRAID OF WHAT,
MENTALLO?"
COMMANDER
RAVN DEMANDS.

"BOOSTING THE POWER OF COMPUTREX, THE FIXER
TAPPED INTO S.H.I.E.L.D.'S OWN COMPUTERS! SOON
OUR MASTERS KNEW WHAT THE **ESPERS** HAD DISCOVERED!"

DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE RECESSES OF MENTALLO'S MIND, COMMANDER RANN SEEKS TO KNOW THE NATURE OF THIS AWESOME DISCOVERY!



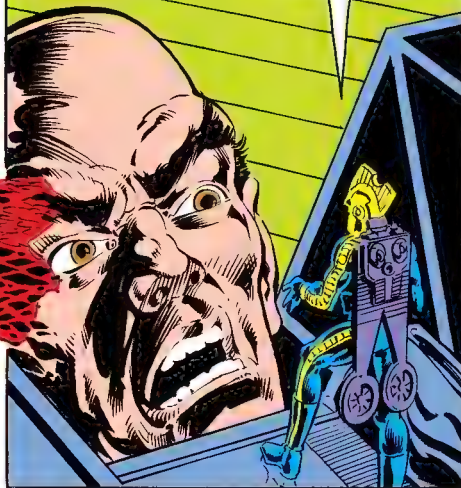
ALL HE RECEIVES IS A FLEETING THOUGHT-IMAGE OF A GLOBE OF EBONY ENERGY FLOATING ON A HEAVING LAVA LAKE!

THEN MENTALLO'S FEAR CLOSES OUT THE COMMANDER'S PROBING THOUGHTS!

NO MORE, I TELL YOU! DO WHAT YOU WILL, YOU'LL NOT GET ANYTHING FURTHER OUT OF ME!

YOUR TERROR HAS OVER-RIDDEN YOUR RATIONALITY, MENTALLO! I'LL WAIT UNTIL IT SUBSIDES BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO PROBE FURTHER!

BUT PROBE I WILL-- TO DETERMINE WHAT MANNER OF MENACE FROM THE MICROVERSE IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO MAKE ITS POWER MANIFEST HERE ON EARTH!



BARON KARZA POSSESSED SUCH A MAGNITUDE OF EVIL, ARCTURUS-- BUT HE'S DEAD, SLAIN BY YOU WHEN YOU TOOK ON THE ATTRIBUTE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE AND FACED HIM AS TIME TRAVELER!

WITH AN ASSIST FROM THE WORLD-MIND-- THE SOUL OF MY WORLD... THE LIVING PLANET SPARTAK!*



*IN THE NOW-CLASSIC MICRONAUTS #11.

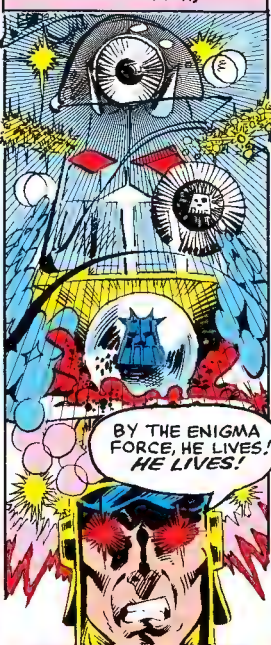
WITH KARZA RULED OUT THERE MUST EXIST ANOTHER WHOSE EVIL RIVALS HIS OWN-- AN EVIL INTENT ON CONQUERING BOTH EARTH AND THE MICROVERSE...

...AN EVIL SO STRONG IT HAS STIRRED THE ENIGMA FORCE WITHIN ME ONCE AGAIN AWAKENING TELEPATHIC ABILITIES I NEVER KNEW I HAD!



YOU **KNOW** THE NATURE OF THIS EVIL, MENTALLO-- AND REVEAL IT YOU SHALL!

DESPITE HIS DESPERATE USE OF EVERY TELEPATH'S TRICK, MENTALLO'S MIND IS LIKE AN OPEN BOOK TO COMMANDER RANN!



BY THE ENIGMA FORCE, HE LIVES! HE LIVES!

THERE, SEEKING THE TRUTH AMONGST THE MYRIAD DECEPTIONS, A SECRET IS REVEALED!

BEFORE COMMANDER RANN CAN EXPLAIN HIS OUTCRY, MENTALLO LETS OUT A SHRILL SCREAM OF AGONY!



HOLY SHREW! TALK ABOUT YER 3TK? BURN-OUTS! THE GUY KEELS OVER, AN' ON HIS 3TK? HEAD APPEARS A SYMBOL OF...

HYDRA, BUG-- MENTALLO'S MASTER--AN EVIL ORGANIZATION NOW CONTROLLED BY AN INSIDIOUS MIND **WITHIN** THE MICROVERSE!



TO FIGHT IT, WE ARE GOING TO NEED THE HELP OF...

S.H.I.E.L.D.!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

WHEN LAST I SPOKE TO YOU, THE ACROYEAR PRINCE SHIATAN HAD BEEN RESURRECTED AND KING ARGON OF HOMEWORLD HAD BETRAYED HIS BETROTHED, THE LADY SLUG, INTO THE HANDS OF THE SAVAGE CENTAURI.

THOUGH SLUG HAS NOW BEEN LIBERATED BY PHAROID AND HIS DESERT DEMONS, THE POWERS OF DARKNESS HAVE GROWN STRONGER, THREATENING TO BIND EVEN ME!

HEED MY WARNING! IF I, **TIME TRAVELER**, FALL BEFORE THEM, WHAT THEN OF THE MICROVERSE? WHAT THEN OF **EARTH**?

BENEATH THE SHIFTING SANDS OF HOMEWORLD'S GREAT SYANITE DESERT LIES A GIANT CAVERN WHICH HOUSES THE ANCIENT SANDZONE CITY OF AEGYPTA.

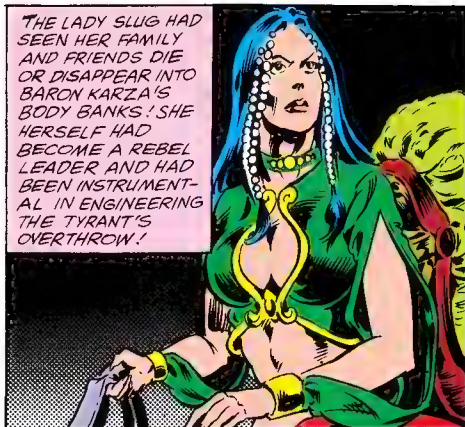
DOMINATING THE CITY, STANDS AN INDESTRUCTIBLE STONE IMAGE...

PHAROID, THAT STATUE--!

YES, M'LADY SLUG, 'TIS NDEED HE WHO WAS ONCE HOMEWORLD'S CHIEF SCIENTIST. HERE IN AEGYPTA HE DIED, 1,000 YEARS AGO--

--TO BE REBORN AS THE ULTIMATE EMBODIMENT OF EVIL...
BARON KARZA

The Origin of
Baron Karza!



THE LADY SLUG HAD SEEN HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS DIE OR DISAPPEAR INTO BARON KARZA'S BODY BANKS. SHE HERSELF HAD BECOME A REBEL LEADER AND HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ENGINEERING THE TYRANT'S OVERTHROW!

THUS, SHE NOW FEELS LESS THAN AT EASE KNOWING THAT SHE IS IN THE VERY CITADEL THAT BIRTHED THE BARON'S EVIL!



IN AEGYPTA, FAIR SLUG, SOME LONG AGO HAD LEARNED THE TRUTH, FAIR SLUG, BUT IT WAS KEPT FROM THE REST OF HOMEWORLD BY KARZA'S COLONIAL GOVERNORS.

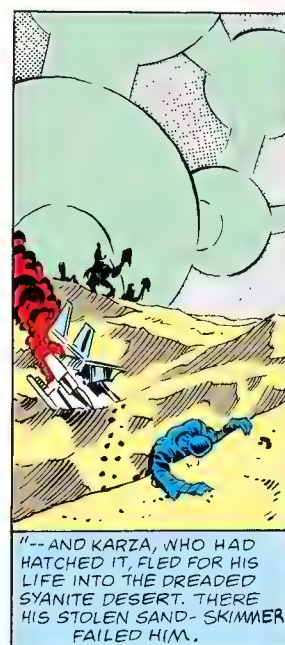


AIDED BY MY DESERT DEMONS, I RECLAIMED THE PROTECTORATE AND ESTABLISHED A CIVIL RULE.



IN THE COURSE OF REBUILDING, A CACHE OF HIDDEN ANCIENT ARCHIVES WAS UNCOVERED. THEY BE-SPOKE A SINISTER ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT THAT TOOK PLACE TEN CENTURIES AGO.

THE TARGETS WERE HOMEWORLD'S REGENT, LORD DALLAN RANN, AND HIS WIFE, THE LADY SEPSIS. THE PLOT WAS DISCOVERED--



"---AND KARZA, WHO HAD HATCHED IT, FLED FOR HIS LIFE INTO THE DREADED SYANITE DESERT. THERE HIS STOLEN SAND-SKIMMER FAILED HIM.



"FOR DAYS HE LAY UNSHIELDED FROM HOMEWORLD'S TWIN SUNS. A STRANGE SUN CULT FOUND HIM AND CARRIED HIM TO THEIR MONASTERY.



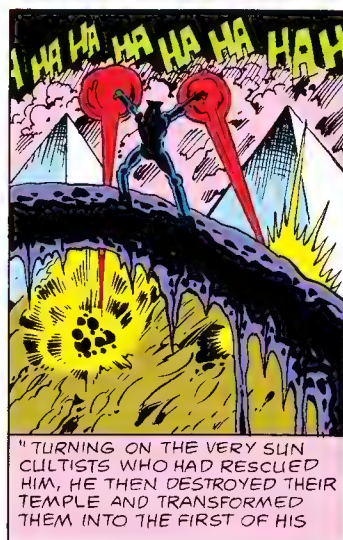
"THERE, THE ASSASSIN HEALED AND SET HIS VAST INTELLECT TO THE TASK OF FATHOMING THE SUN CULT'S SECRET SCROLLS.



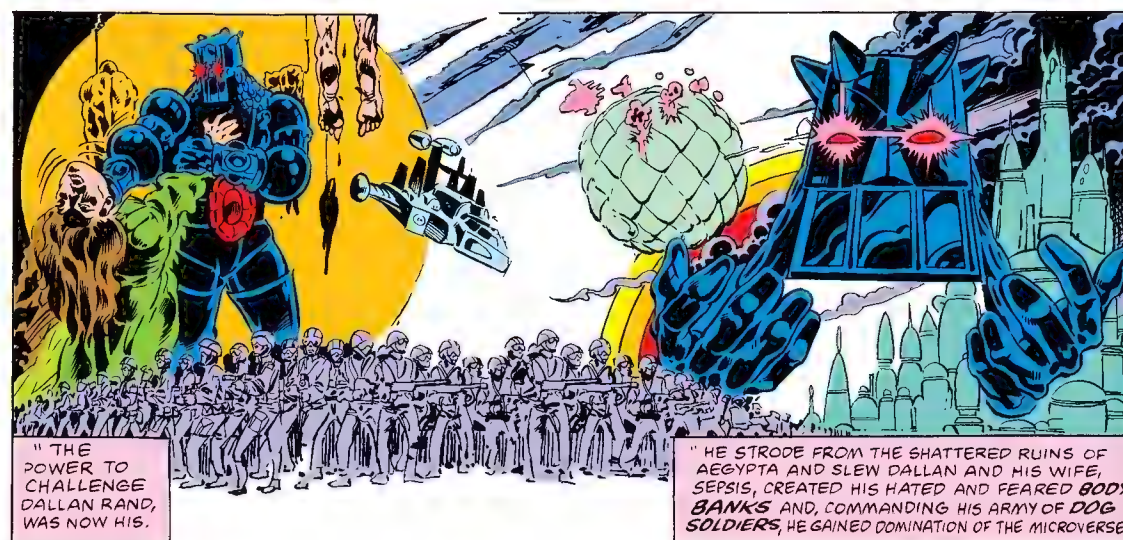
"DECIPHERING THE ANCIENT, UNKNOWN LANGUAGE YIELDED TO HIM MASTERY OF A SCIENCE SAID TO BE OLDER THAN THE MICROVERSE ITSELF.



"IN COMMAND OF A SCIENCE SO FAR BEYOND HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AS TO ALMOST APPEAR SORCEROUS, THE ASSASSIN TRANSFERRED HIS MIND INTO AN INVINCIBLE SUIT OF ARMOR.



"TURNING ON THE VERY SUN CULTISTS WHO HAD RESCUED HIM, HE THEN DESTROYED THEIR TEMPLE AND TRANSFORMED THEM INTO THE FIRST OF HIS



"THE POWER TO CHALLENGE DALLAN RANN, WAS NOW HIS.



NOW KARZA IS DEAD, HIS REIGN OF EVIL ENDED.

NO! FOR THE FIRST TIME I UNDERSTAND THE ENORMITY OF KARZA'S POWER!

HE MUST HAVE ANTICIPATED HIS DEFEAT, PLANNED FOR IT! DON'T YOU SEE? IF MERE SERVANTS LIKE SHAITAN CAN RETURN FROM THE GRAVE--

--THEN NOT EVEN DEATH CAN LONG IMPRISON KARZA HIMSELF!

THE SUBATOMIC PLANET HOMEWORLD IS, IN REALITY, A WHIRLING CHAIN OF MOLECULES. ONE OF THOSE MOLECULES IS KNOWN AS THE PRIMAL ZONE.

HERE THE PLANET EXISTS MUCH AS IT DID AT BIRTH--A SEETHING, MIASMIC, VOLCANIC CALDRON--A HEAVING GEOLOGIC LANDSCAPE BATHED IN MUTAGENIC RADIATIONS.

INSANE... OR UNDEAD!

THE FACELESS PRIESTS, WHOSE INHUMAN INCANTATION WAITS ABOVE THE HISSING OF THE FALLING ASH, HAVE BEEN SOMETHING OTHER THAN ALIVE FOR TEN CENTURIES.

THE ARMORED ACROYEAR, PRINCE SHAITAN, HAD LOST HIS LIFE WHEN IMPALED UPON HIS BROTHER'S ENERGY SWORD.

ALONE AMONG THE EERIE ENTOURAGE, ONLY THE MAN-BEAST, KING ARGON IS TRULY ALIVE.

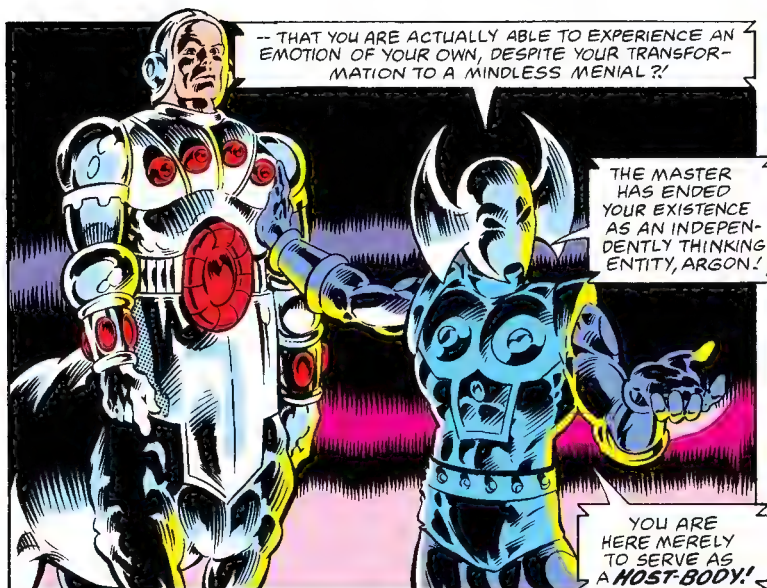
THAT SITUATION MAY SOON TAKE A CHANGE FOR THE WORSE.

YOU TREMBLE, KING ARGON! INTERESTING--YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE ENOUGH OF A MIND LEFT TO KNOW FEAR OR LOATHING!

ONE WOULD HAVE TO BE INSANE TO RISK ONE'S LIFE BY COMING HERE.

WHAT IS IT THAT FRIGHTENS YOU ABOUT THIS PLACE? THE DIZZY HEIGHTS OF THE CRATER CLIFFS? THE SEETHING LAVA LAKES BLASTING US WITH THEIR HELLISH HEAT?

OR CAN IT BE YONDER SINISTER **SPHERE**, FLOATING UNSCATHED AMIDST THE LIQUID INFERNO, THAT FILLS YOU WITH SO SOUL-NUMBING A DREAD--



-- THAT YOU ARE ACTUALLY ABLE TO EXPERIENCE AN EMOTION OF YOUR OWN, DESPITE YOUR TRANSFORMATION TO A MINDLESS MENIAL?!

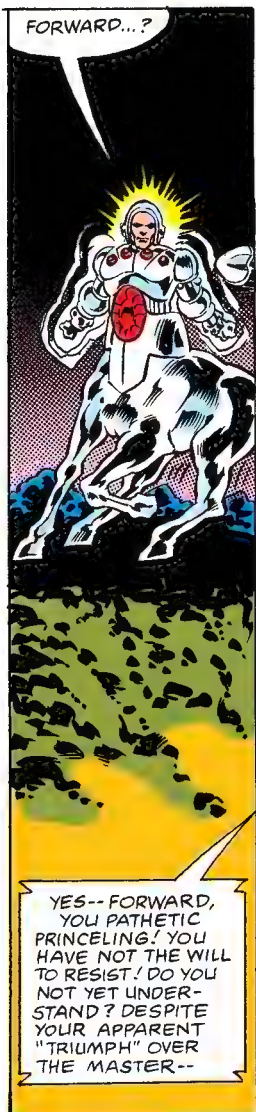
THE MASTER HAS ENDED YOUR EXISTENCE AS AN INDEPENDENTLY THINKING ENTITY, ARGON!

YOU ARE HERE MERELY TO SERVE AS A **HOST-BODY!**

AT SHAITAN'S SIGNAL, THE WAILING OF THE SILVER-SKINNED PRIESTS INCREASES IN INTENSITY.

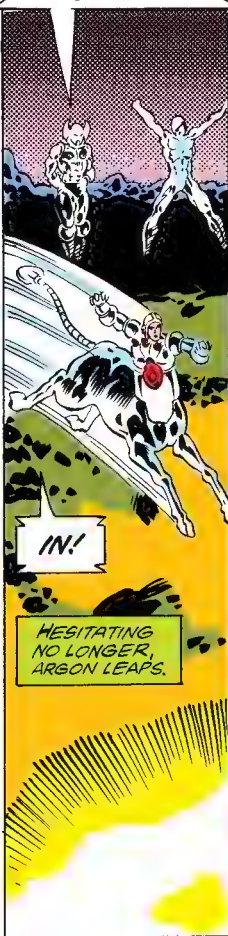


NOW, ARGON-- FORWARD! THAT WHICH RESIDES WITHIN THE SPHERE AWAITS YOU!



FORWARD...?

-- SINCE THE MOMENT HE TRANSFORMED YOU INTO A MAN-BEAST IN THE BOWELS OF HIS BODY BANKS, YOU HAVE BEEN HIS CREATURE TO COMMAND... BODY AND SOUL!



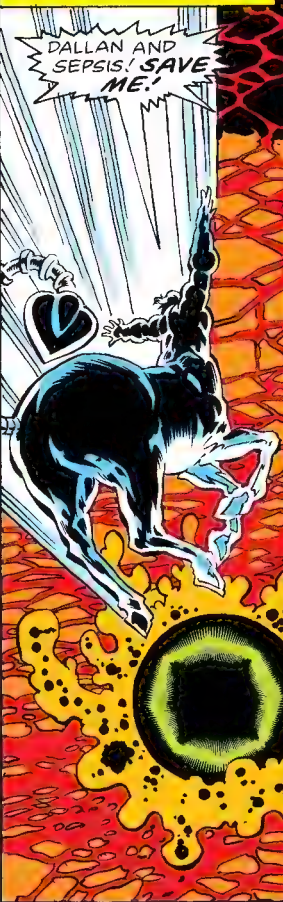
IN!

HESITATING NO LONGER, ARGON LEAPS.

YES-- FORWARD, YOU PATHETIC PRINCELING! YOU HAVE NOT THE WILL TO RESIST! DO YOU NOT YET UNDERSTAND? DESPITE YOUR APPARENT "TRIUMPH" OVER THE MASTER--

THE FIERCE HEAT OF THE LAVA LAKE RISES TO MEET HIM... BUT IT IS THE COOL **SPHERE**--ALIVE WITH EVIL--THAT DRAWS HIM DOWN.

AT THE LAST SECOND, HIS OWN WILL-POWER RE-ESTABLISHES ITSELF, AND ARGON CRIES OUT.



DALLAN AND SEPSIS! **SAVE ME!**

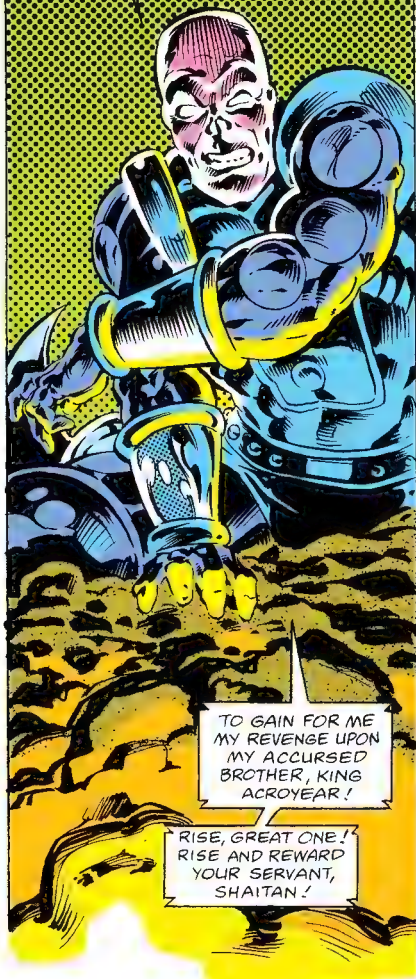
IT IS A FUTILE PLEA. 1,000 YEARS AGO, AGAINST THIS SAME ALL-CONSUMING EVIL, HOMEWORLD'S LEGENDARY RULERS POSSESSED NOT THE POWER TO SAVE EVEN THEMSELVES.



ARGON'S IMPACT WITH THE EBONY SPHERE DRIVES SHAITAN TO HIS KNEES, YET STILL HE STRUGGLES TO PEEK THROUGH THE RISING WALL OF SULPHEROUS STEAM.

IT IS DONE! THE MASTER AT LAST HAS A HOST-BODY WITH WHICH TO MERGE HIS MIND! HE IS FREED FROM THE CORE OF HOMEWORLD WHOSE ATOMIC FIRES BURNED AND BOUND HIS EVIL!

HE IS REBORN--
TO CONQUER,
TO CONTROL,
TO KILL!



TO GAIN FOR ME
MY REVENGE UPON
MY ACCURSED
BROTHER, KING
ACROYEAR!

RISE, GREAT ONE!
RISE AND REWARD
YOUR SERVANT,
SHAITAN!



AYE,
DOG!
RISE I
SHALL!

GATHER TO
ME MY FORCES,
SHITAN! TELL
THEM KING ARGON
IS NO MORE! TELL
THEM THE ENIGMA
FORCE IS BOUND
TO MY WILL!

TELL
THEM
THAT
BARON
KARZA
LIVES
AGAIN!

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

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COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



THE MICRONAUTS

**BARON KARZA
RETURNS!**
NUFF SAID!



Space Glider. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Microtron. Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

BILL MANTLO * **PAT BRODERICK**
WRITER — STORYTELLERS — ARTIST

ARMANDO GIL
INKER

JOE ROSEN LETTERS
BOB SHAREN COLORS

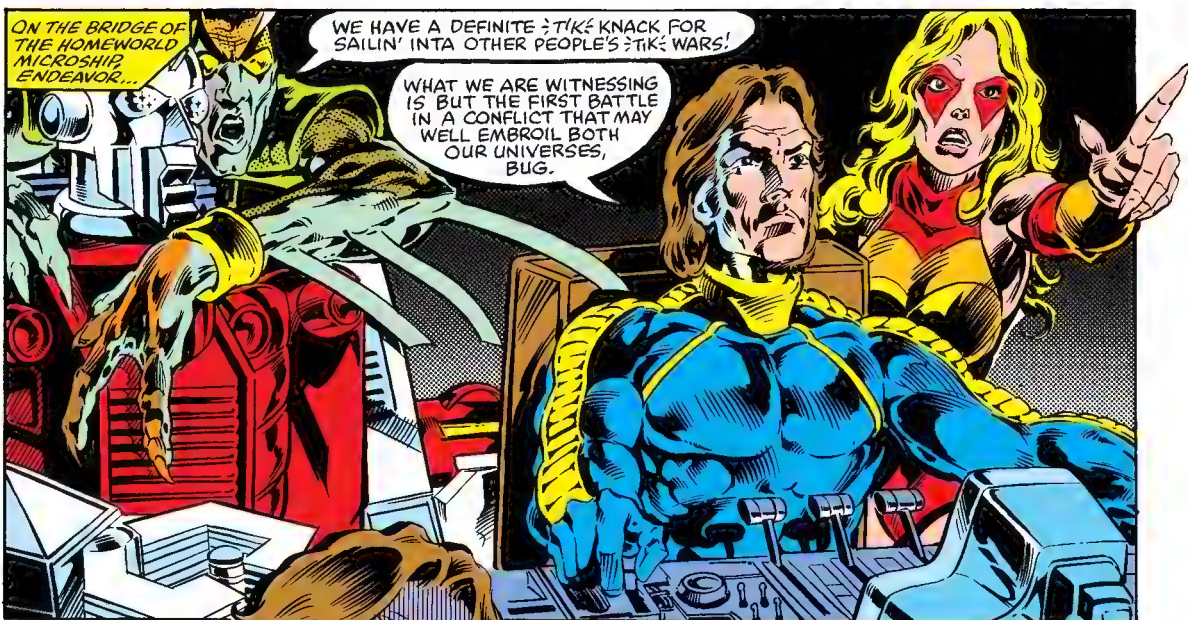
LOUISE JONES
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



HAVING LEARNED OF A MENACE OF SUCH MAGNITUDE THAT IT THREATENS BOTH THIS EARTH AND THEIR BELOVED MICROVERSE, THE SEVEN TINY ADVENTURERS CALLED **MICRONAUTS** RACE TO SAVE BOTH WORLDS, ONLY TO FIND THEMSELVES IN THE MIST OF AN...





ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HOMEWORLD MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR...

WE HAVE A DEFINITE Δ TIK Δ KNACK FOR SAILIN' INTA OTHER PEOPLE'S Δ TIK Δ WARS!

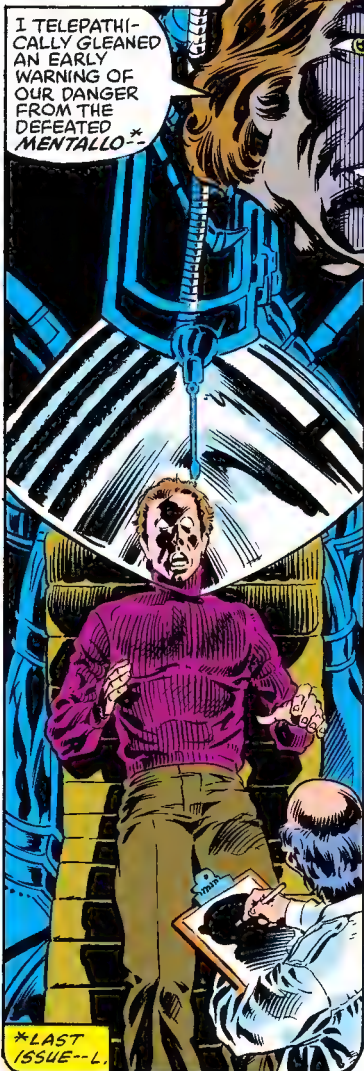
WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IS BUT THE FIRST BATTLE IN A CONFLICT THAT MAY WELL EMBROIL BOTH OUR UNIVERSES, BUG.

I TELEPATHICALLY GLEANED AN EARLY WARNING OF OUR DANGER FROM THE DEFEATED **MENTALLO**...

MENTALLO DISCOVERED THAT THE **ESPERS*** HAD CONTACTED AN EVIL POWER IN OUR MICROVERSE WHICH WAS GROWING STRONG ENOUGH TO REACH OUT TO EARTH--

YEAH, AN THEY Δ TIK Δ FRIED MENTALLO'S BRAINS LONG-DISTANCE FOR LETTIN' YOU WORM THE Δ TIK Δ INFO OUTTA HIM!

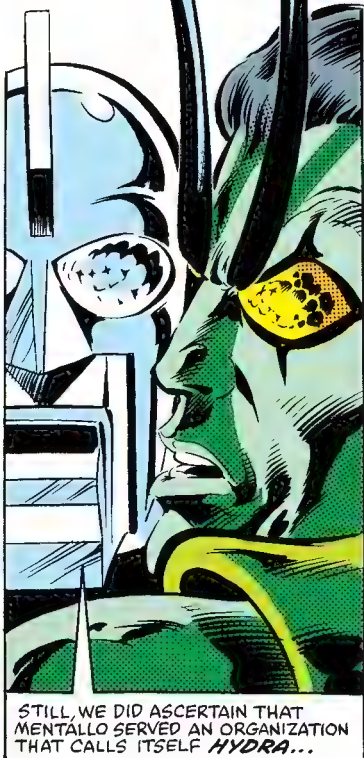
--AND THIS INFORMATION WAS GREETED MOST EAGERLY BY MENTALLO'S MYSTERIOUS **MASTERS**!



*LAST ISSUE--L



* A GROUP OF EARTHLINGS EMPLOYED BY S.H.I.E.L.D. TO ENGAGE IN EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION RESEARCH--LOUISE.



STILL, WE DID ASCERTAIN THAT MENTALLO SERVED AN ORGANIZATION THAT CALLS ITSELF **HYDRA**...



...WHOSE EVIL EMBLEM EMBLAZONS THE ARMOR OF THE AGENTS ASSAULTING THE HOVERING HELIFORTRESS HEADQUARTERS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

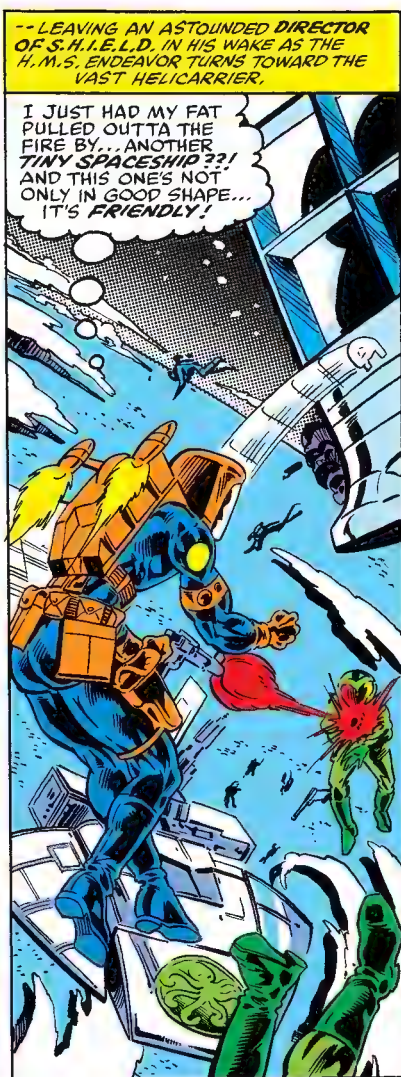
NOW, COL. FURY, YOU DIE! EH?



WELL, IT SURE WAS NICE OF 'EM TA 3TIK3 GIVE US A WAY TA TELL THE GOOD GUYS FROM THE 3TIK3 BAD GUYS!

EEYARGH!

THRILLING AT THE THOUGHT OF BATTLE, THE EXUBERANT MICRONAUT, **BUG**, FIRES ON HIS FIRST HYDRA AGENT WITH HIS THORIUM BLASTER--



--LEAVING AN ASTOUNDED DIRECTOR OF S.H.I.E.L.D. IN HIS WAKE AS THE H.M.S. ENDEAVOR TURNS TOWARD THE VAST HELICARRIER.

I JUST HAD MY FAT PULLED OUTTA THE FIRE BY... ANOTHER TINY SPACESHIP?! AND THIS ONE'S NOT ONLY IN GOOD SHAPE... IT'S FRIENDLY!

WHOEVER THEY ARE AN' WHATEVER THEY'RE DOIN' HERE, I OWE 'EM--AN' NICK FURY ALWAYS PAYS HIS DEBTS!



HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, THE GRIZZLED VETERAN RETURNS TO THE TASK OF REPELLING THE HYDRA ASSAULT.

IT SEEMS AN IMPOSSIBLE UNDER TAKING, GIVEN THE NUMBERS OF THE FOE.

DESPITE OUR LOSSES, WE HAVE BREACHED THE HELICARRIER'S HULL!

HAIL HYDRA! CUT OFF A LIMB AND TWO MORE SHALL TAKE ITS PLACE!

AH >TIKE SHADDUP!

YAAAGH!

GABE! WHAT IS THAT THING?

I DON'T KNOW-- BUT IT'S TAKEN THE HEAT OFF OF US!

LET'S HIT THOSE HYDRA HATCHETMEN, BOYS! FORWARD-- FOR S.H.I.E.L.D.!

AS GABE JONES LEADS HIS SQUAD OF DEFENDERS TO THE ATTACK-- NO ONE NOTICES THE TINY MICROSHIP CAMOUFLAGED IN THE SHADOWS OVERHEAD.

WHY DO WE HIDE WHEN THERE IS A BATTLE TO BE FOUGHT, COMMANDER?

WE DON'T HIDE, ACRO-YEAR-- THE ENDEAVOR DOES. I WANT MY SHIP SAFE--

-- WHILE WE SEEK OUT THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPER UNIT VIA OUR GLIDER WINGS! BIOTRON AND MICROTRO, YOU STAY WITH THE SHIP!

NATURALLY.

OH, DRAT!

YA MEAN WE GOTTA >TIKE FLY AGAIN?!

OH >TIKE SPIT!

IF YOU'D PRACTICE YOU MIGHT GET THE HANG OF IT, BUG!

LET'S GO, MICRONAUTS!

HAILING FROM KALIKLAK, A WORLD WHERE THE ONLY INSECTIVORIDS THAT FLY ARE BORN WITH WINGS, BUG HAS AN INNATE DISLIKE OF BEING AIRBORNE...

PRACTICE SHE 3TIK3 SAYS! WHO'S MARIONETTE 3TIK3 KIDDIN'?! THESE WING-THINGS 3TIK3 HATE ME!

YEE 3TIK3 OWW! AN' THE FEELIN'S MUTUAL!

BIOTRON AND MICROTON MONITOR THE MICRONAUTS' PROGRESS FROM THE ENDEAVOR'S BRIDGE...

BUG SEEMS TO BE HAVING HIS USUAL DIFFICULTIES.

IT FIGURES!

AWRIGHT! JUST GOTTA 3TIK3 STAY STRAIGHT--!

FWAP

THAT DOES IT! THAT 3TIK3 DOES IT!

S'LONG 3TIK3 WING-THINGS!

WHAT'S THE POINT A FLYIN' WHEN YERS 3TIK3 TRULY'S GOT THE NATCHERL ABILITY TA 3TIK3 CLING TA ANY SURFACE?

THERE AIN'T NO 3TIK3 POINT! AH, WHAT THE HECK--YA CAN'T 3TIK3 COURT-MARTIAL A VOLUNTEER!

HEY! WHUZZAT INSIDE THIS 3TIK3 CHAMBER ???

HOLY 3TIK3 SHREW!!!

WHATEVER BUG SEES WILL HAVE TO AWAIT REVELATION...



...FOR BUG'S FELLOW MICRO-NAUTS HAVE ANOTHER OBSTACLE IN THEIR PATH TO THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPER UNIT.

HYDRA AGENTS!

THEY'RE SEEKING THE SAME THING WE ARE, ACROYEAR!

YOU'RE READING THEIR MINDS, ARCTURUS?

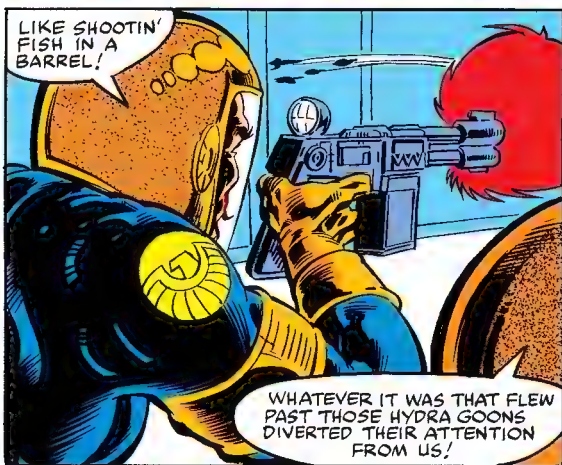
YES, MARI-- AND THE MINDS OF THOSE S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS LYING IN WAIT FOR THEM!



LOOK! LITTLE FLYING PEOPLE--!

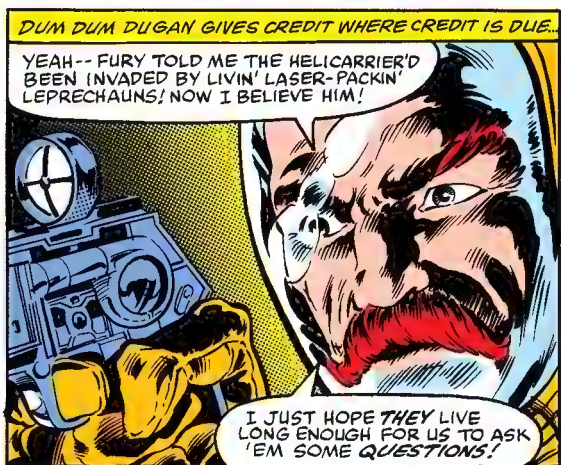
ARE YOU CRAZY? STAY ON THE ALERT FOR--!

ARGHH! S.H.I.E.L.D. AMBUSH!!



LIKE SHOOTIN' FISH IN A BARREL!

WHATEVER IT WAS THAT FLEW PAST THOSE HYDRA GOONS DIVERTED THEIR ATTENTION FROM US!



DUM DUM DUGAN GIVES CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE...

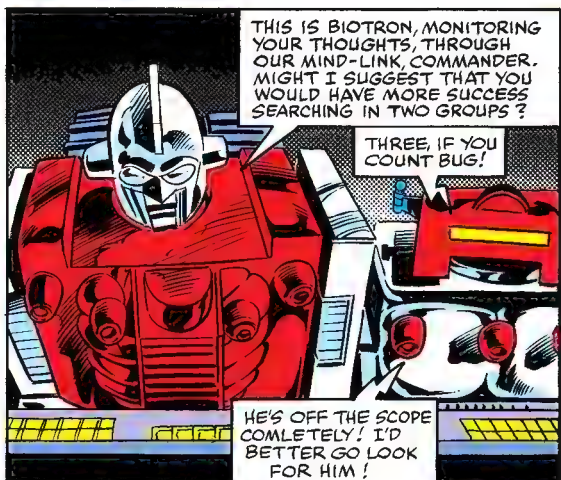
YEAH-- FURY TOLD ME THE HELICARRIER'D BEEN INVADDED BY LIVIN' LASER-PACKIN' LEPRECHAUNS! NOW I BELIEVE HIM!

I JUST HOPE THEY LIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO ASK 'EM SOME QUESTIONS!



COMMANDER, YOU ARE USING YOUR NEWFOUND TELEPATHIC ABILITIES TO VECTOR IN ON OUR DESTINATION?

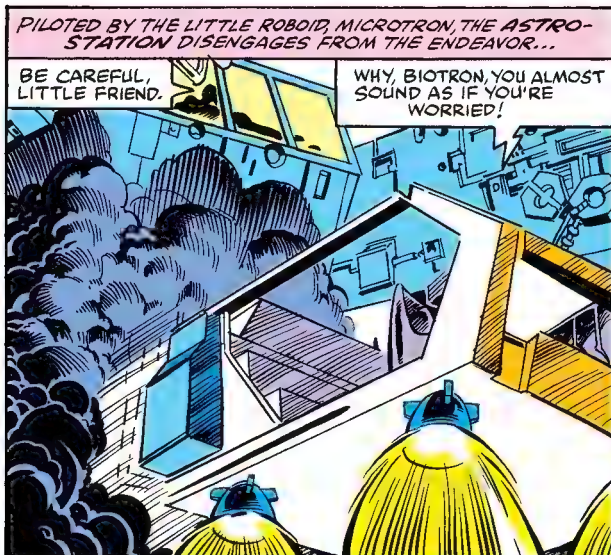
I'M TRYING, BUT THE ESPER UNIT HAS PSIONICALLY SHIELDED ITSELF FROM MY PROBING, ACROYEAR!



THIS IS BIOTRON, MONITORING YOUR THOUGHTS, THROUGH OUR MIND-LINK, COMMANDER. MIGHT I SUGGEST THAT YOU WOULD HAVE MORE SUCCESS SEARCHING IN TWO GROUPS?

THREE, IF YOU COUNT BUG!

HE'S OFF THE SCOPE COMPLETELY! I'D BETTER GO LOOK FOR HIM!



PILOTED BY THE LITTLE ROBOID, MICROTRON, THE ASTRO-STATION DISENGAGES FROM THE ENDEAVOR...

BE CAREFUL, LITTLE FRIEND.

WHY, BIOTRON, YOU ALMOST SOUND AS IF YOU'RE WORRIED!

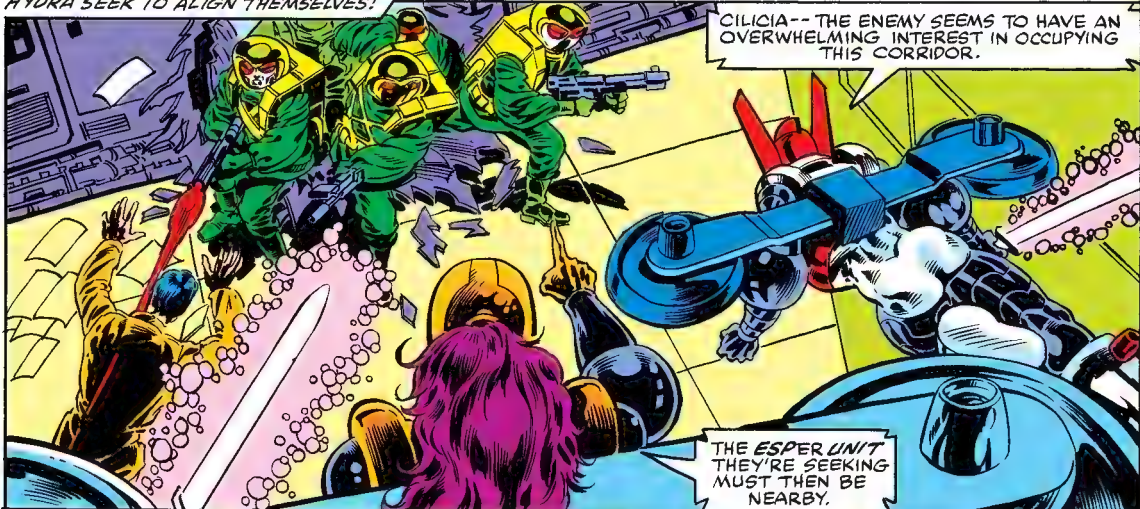


I AM, COMMANDER RANN'S SUDDENLY HEIGHTENED TELEPATHIC ABILITIES COULD ONLY STEM FROM THE ENIGMA FORCE...

...THE POWER THAT PROTECTS THE MICROVERSE, ONLY APPEARING IN TIMES OF GATHERING DARKNESS. IF THE ENIGMA FORCE STIRS NOW, IT MEANS THE DANGER MUST BE GREATER THAN WE DARE DREAM.

THE ROBOID HELMSMAN HAS REASON TO FEAR--

--FOR IT IS WITH THAT EVIL, AWAKENING IN THE DEPTHS OF THE S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER, THAT THE HORDES OF HYDRA SEEK TO ALIGN THEMSELVES!



CILICIA-- THE ENEMY SEEMS TO HAVE AN OVERWHELMING INTEREST IN OCCUPYING THIS CORRIDOR.

THE ESPER UNIT THEY'RE SEEKING MUST THEN BE NEARBY.



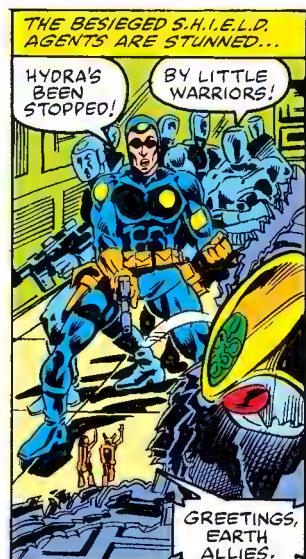
LET US CLEAR A PATH, MILADY.



AYE, MILORD.

S-SOMETHING IS TEARING UP THE FLOOR BEFORE US--!?!?

RRRRRRRIIIIPPP



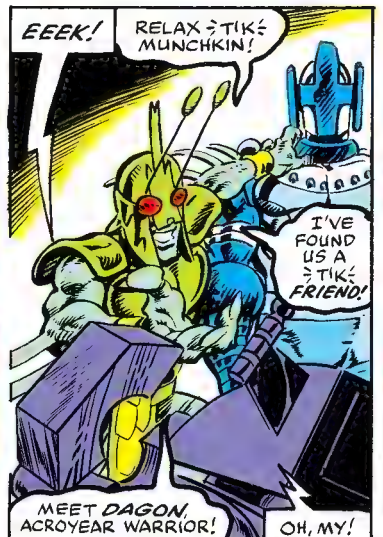
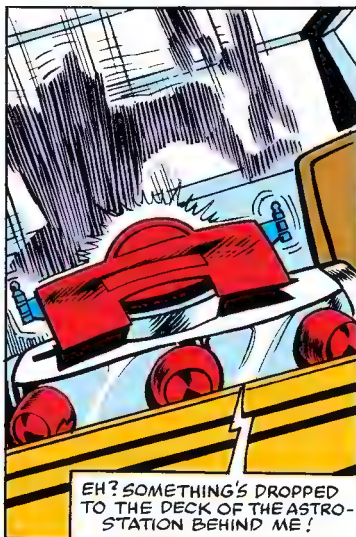
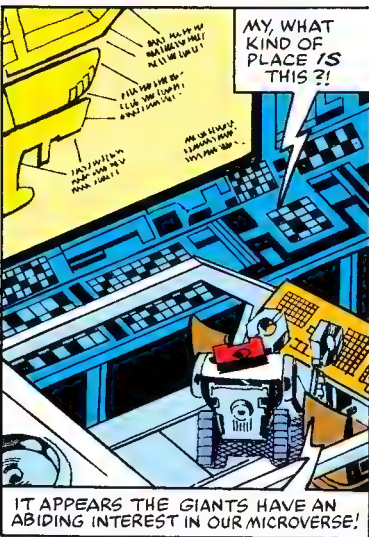
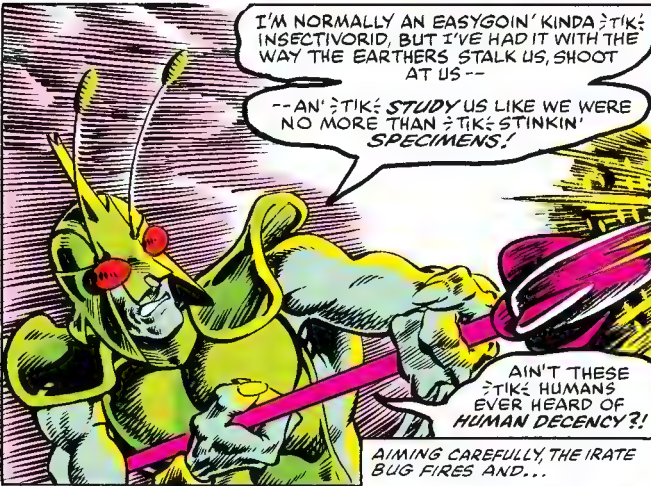
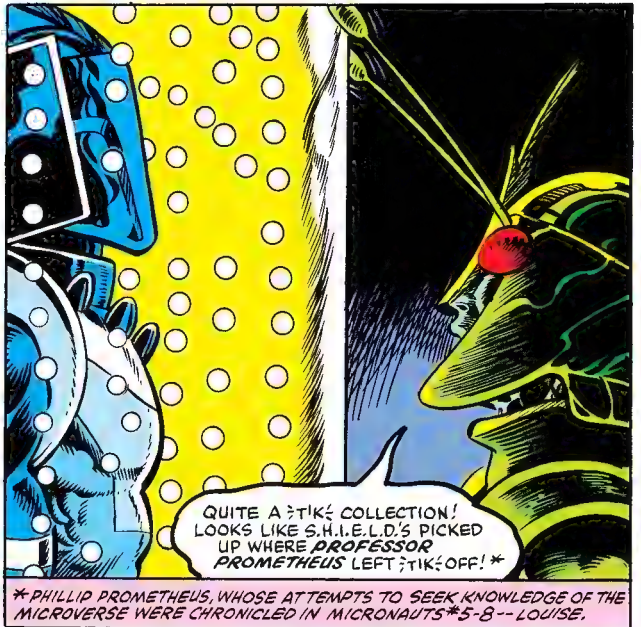
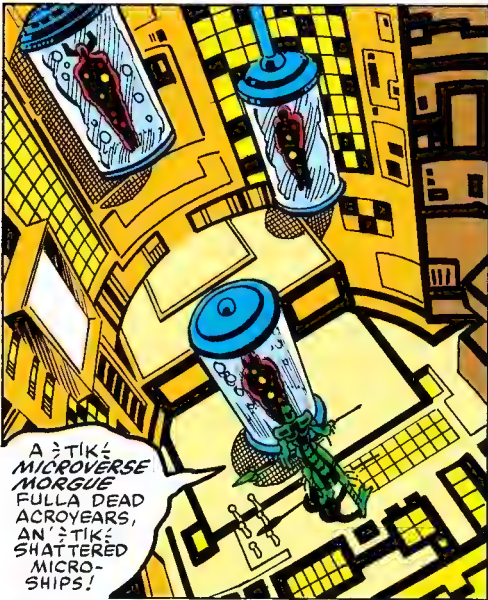
THE BESIEGED S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS ARE STUNNED...

HYDRA'S BEEN STOPPED!

BY LITTLE WARRIORS!

GREETINGS, EARTH ALLIES.

ELSEWHERE, BUG HAS MADE AN EXCITING DISCOVERY...





CORRIDORS AWAY...

ARCTURUS, WHERE IN THE NAME OF DALLAN AND SEPSIS ARE WE?!

WE MUST BE COMING CLOSE TO THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPER UNIT, MARI--

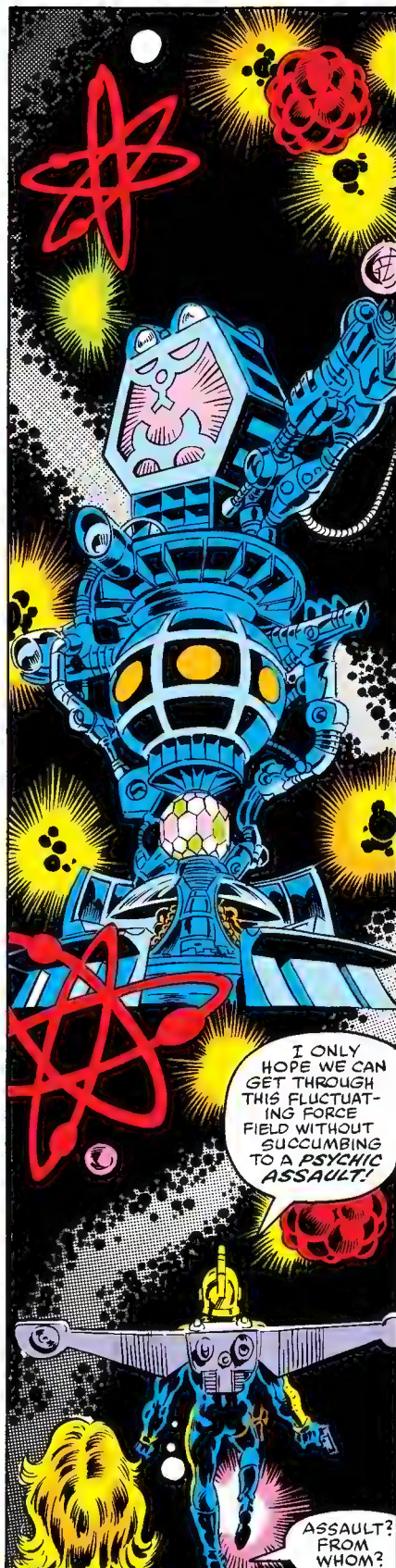
--AS EVIDENCED BY THOSE POOR SOULS WHO WERE CAUGHT IN A FREAK PSYCHIC FLASH-FIELD ERUPTING FROM WITHIN THE UNIT ITSELF!

THEY'VE BEEN HOPELESSLY BRAIN-BLASTED!



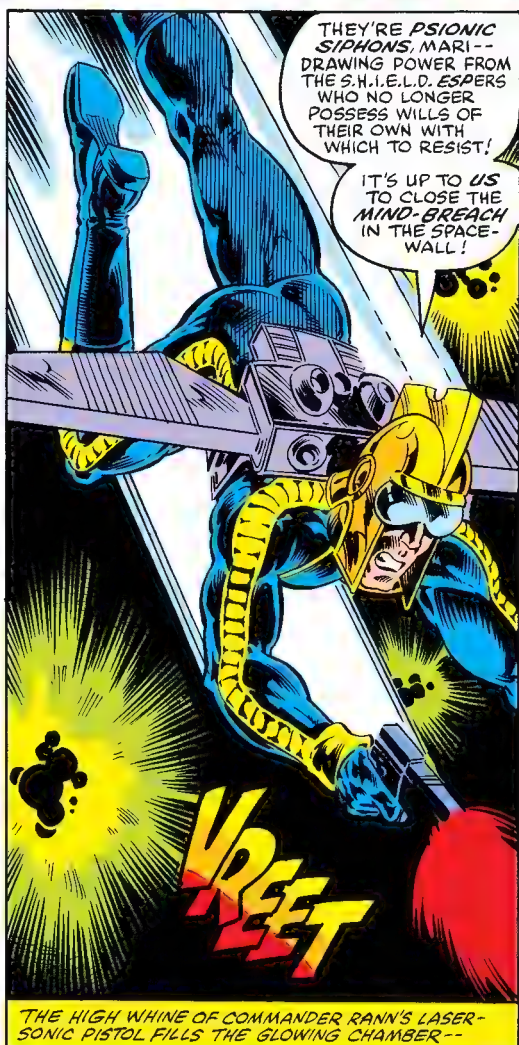
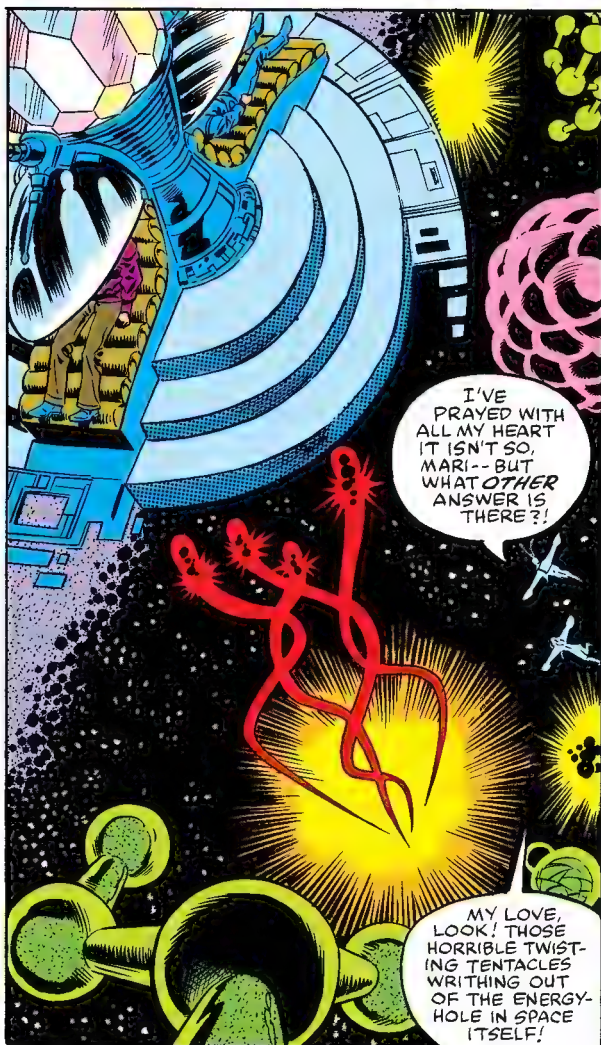
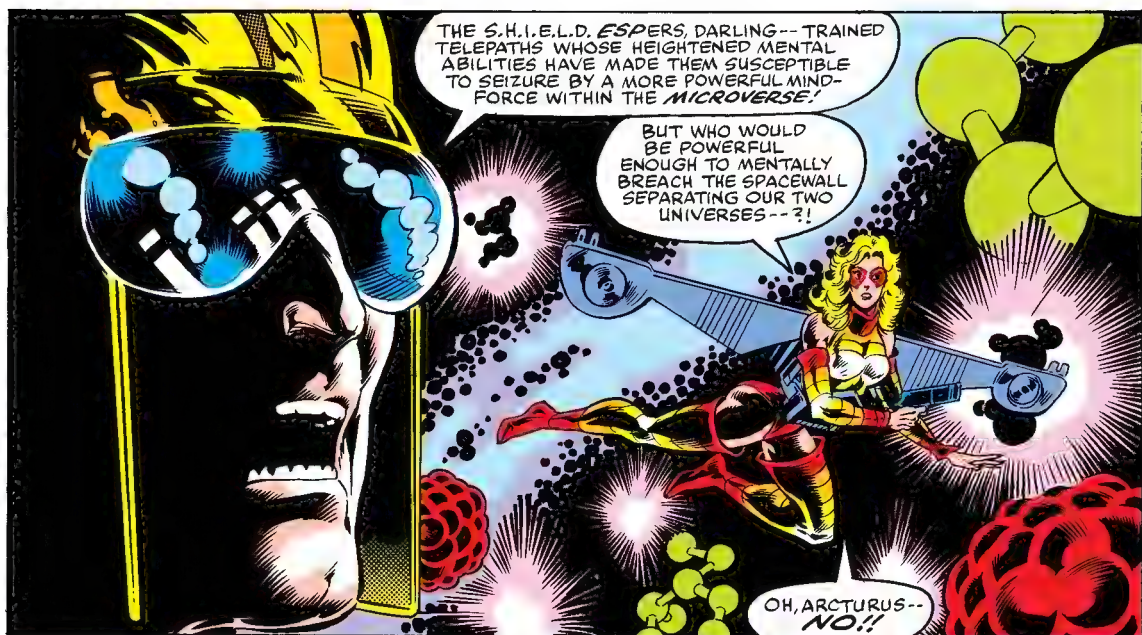
BUT, ARCTURUS-- OUR MINDS AREN'T SHIELDED EITHER!

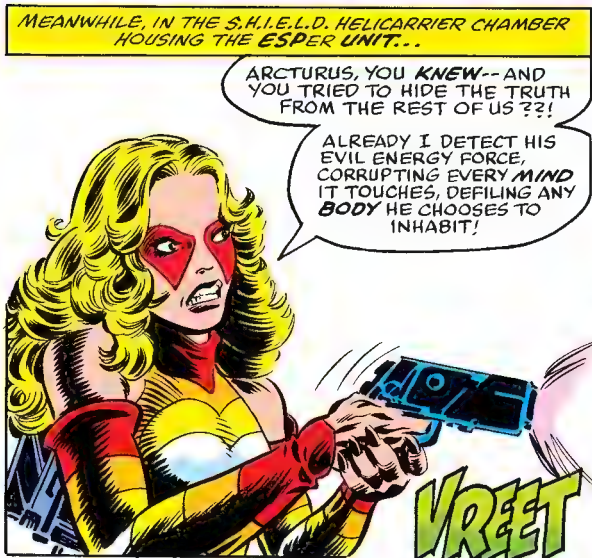
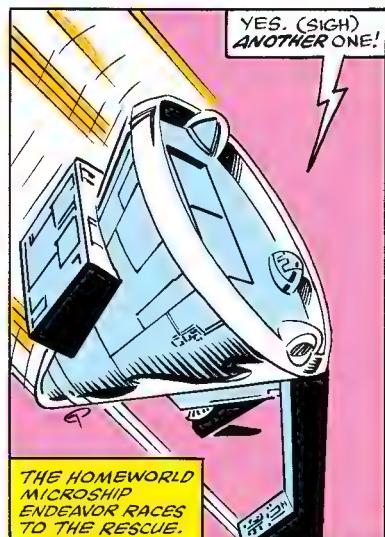
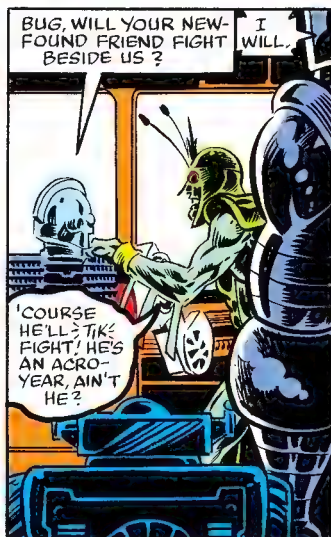
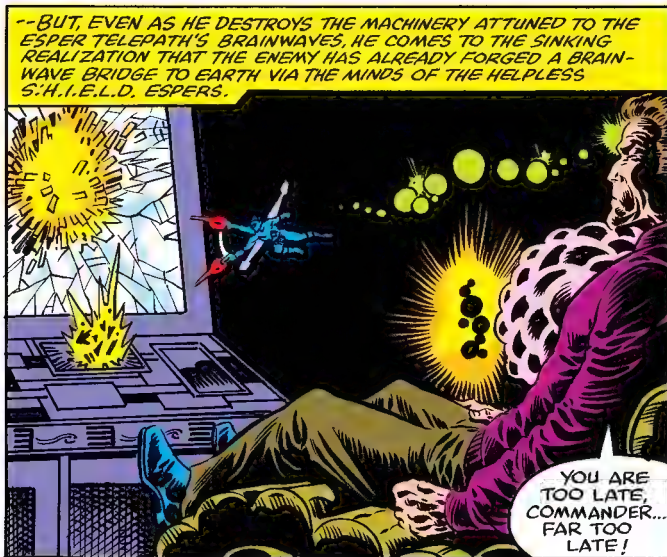
I'M SHIELDING US WITH MY OWN NEWLY-EMERGENT MIND-POWERS, MARI!



I ONLY HOPE WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS FLUCTUATING FORCE FIELD WITHOUT SUCCEEDING TO A PSYCHIC ASSAULT!

ASSAULT? FROM WHOM?







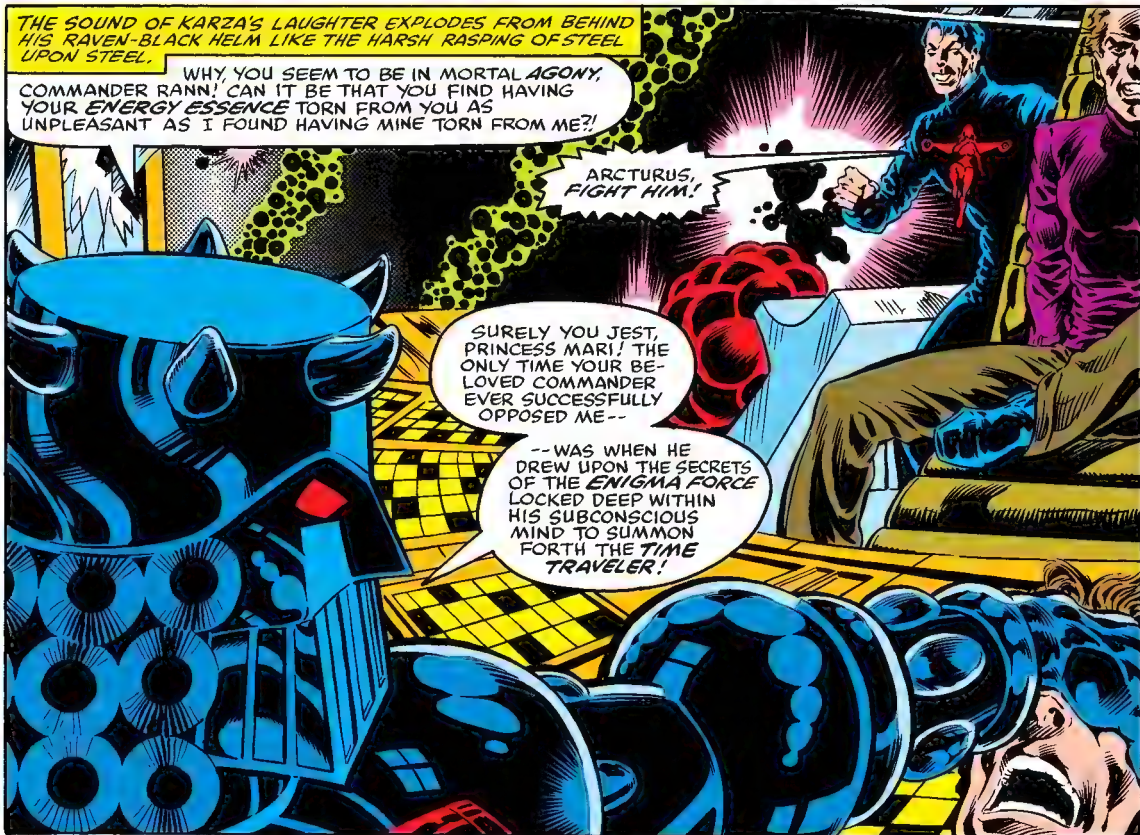
NOW, HOWEVER, THERE IS
NO LONGER ANY NEED
FOR SUCH CLUMSY
GO-BETWEENS!

WE WERE TOO
LATE! WE COULDN'T
STOP HIM! HE'S
HERE! HE'S HERE!

YOU
FORGET
YOUR DUTIES
AS A HOST,
COMMANDER
RANN! SURELY
ETIQUETTE DIC-
TATES THAT
YOU SAY:
WELCOME TO
EARTH, BARON
KARZA!

BEFORE RANN
CAN REACT, BARON
KARZA BREACHES
THE SPACEWALL
AND TEARS THE
SECRETS OF THE
ENIGMA FORCE
FROM THE COM-
MANDER'S REELING
BRAIN.

THE CHAMBER STINKS OF SULPHUR,
AND THE COMMANDER'S SCREAM SIGNALS
THE COMING OF... ARMAGEDDON!



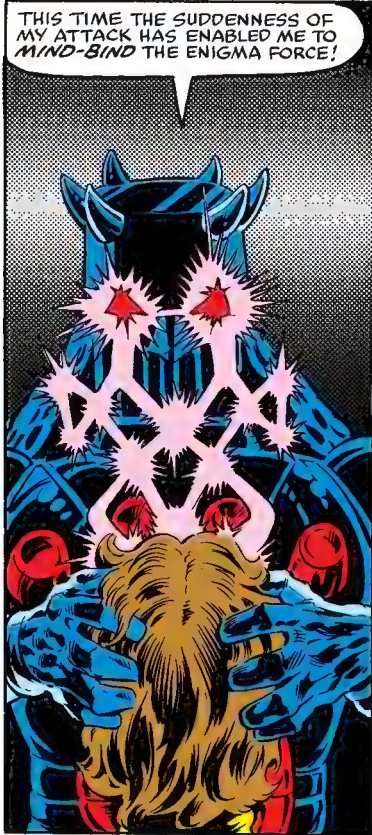
THE SOUND OF KARZA'S LAUGHTER EXPLODES FROM BEHIND HIS RAVEN-BLACK HELM LIKE THE HARSH RASPING OF STEEL UPON STEEL.

WHY, YOU SEEM TO BE IN MORTAL AGONY, COMMANDER RANN! CAN IT BE THAT YOU FIND HAVING YOUR ENERGY ESSENCE TORN FROM YOU AS UNPLEASANT AS I FOUND HAVING MINE TORN FROM ME?!

ARCTURUS, FIGHT HIM!

SURELY YOU JEST, PRINCESS MARI! THE ONLY TIME YOUR BE-LOVED COMMANDER EVER SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED ME--

-- WAS WHEN HE DREW UPON THE SECRETS OF THE ENIGMA FORCE LOCKED DEEP WITHIN HIS SUBCONSCIOUS MIND TO SUMMON FORTH THE TIME TRAVELER!



THIS TIME THE SUDDENNESS OF MY ATTACK HAS ENABLED ME TO MIND-BIND THE ENIGMA FORCE!

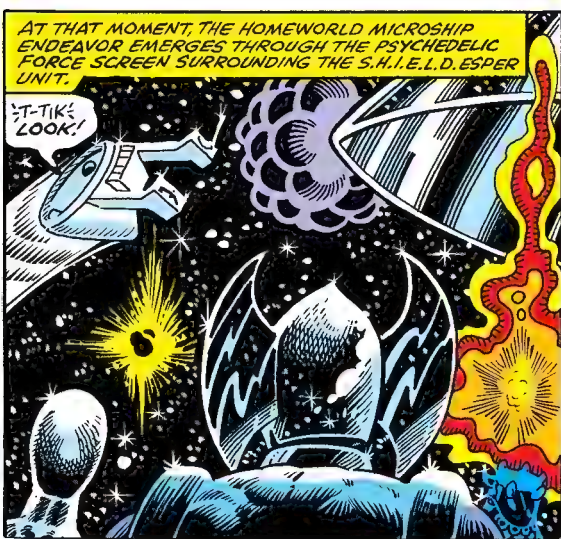
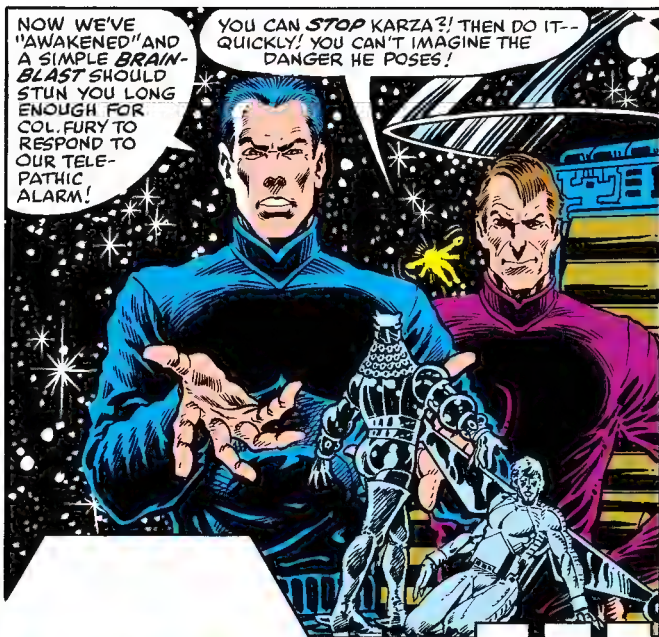


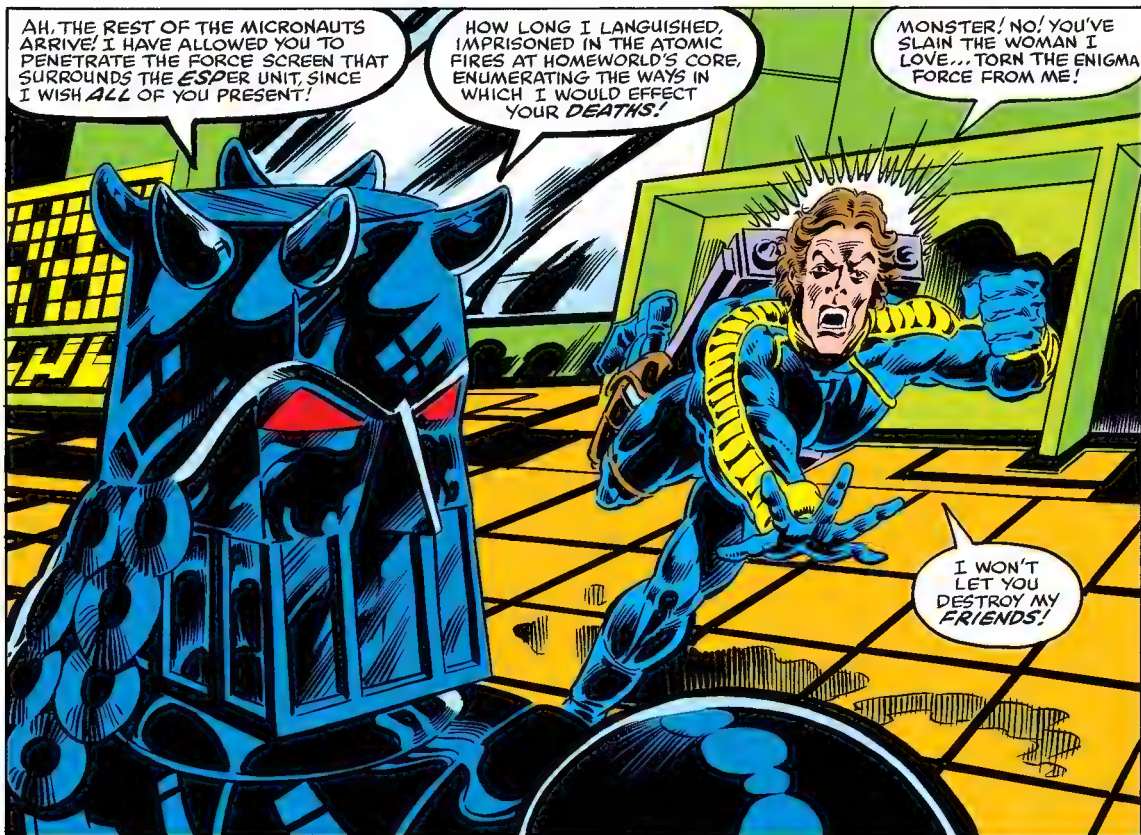
THIS TIME NO TIME TRAVELER WILL APPEAR TO SAFEGUARD THE MICROVERSE, NO CAPTAIN UNIVERSE* WILL MATERIALIZE TO CHAMPION THE RACES OF EARTH! THIS TIME BARON KARZA WILL CONQUER TWO UNIVERSES!

YOU'RE FORGETTING ABOUT S.H.I.E.L.D., YOU MINIATURE MANIAC!

RIGHT! YOU CAUGHT US BY SURPRISE ONCE, WHILE WE WERE IN AN ESP "RECEIVING STATE"--!

*KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR CAPTAIN UNIVERSE'S NEW ADVENTURES IN MARVEL SPOTLIGHT-- LOUISE.



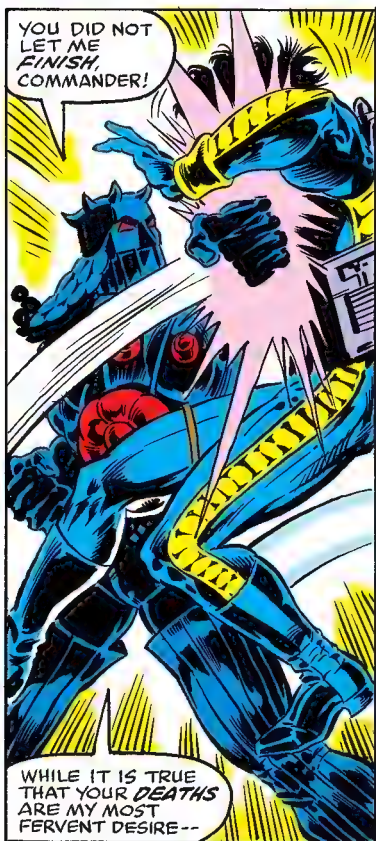


AH, THE REST OF THE MICRONAUTS ARRIVE! I HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO PENETRATE THE FORCE SCREEN THAT SURROUNDS THE *ESPER* UNIT, SINCE I WISH *ALL* OF YOU PRESENT!

HOW LONG I LANGUISED, IMPRISONED IN THE ATOMIC FIRES AT HOMEWORLD'S CORE, ENUMERATING THE WAYS IN WHICH I WOULD EFFECT YOUR *DEATHS*!

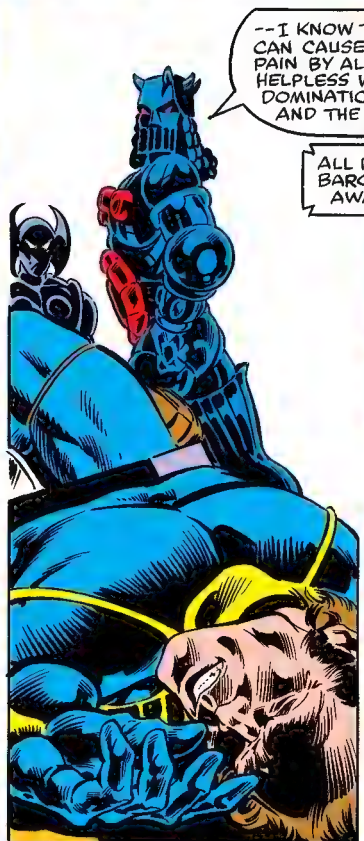
MONSTER! NO! YOU'VE SLAIN THE WOMAN I LOVE... TORN THE ENIGMA FORCE FROM ME!

I WON'T LET YOU DESTROY MY *FRIENDS*!



YOU DID NOT LET ME *FINISH*, COMMANDER!

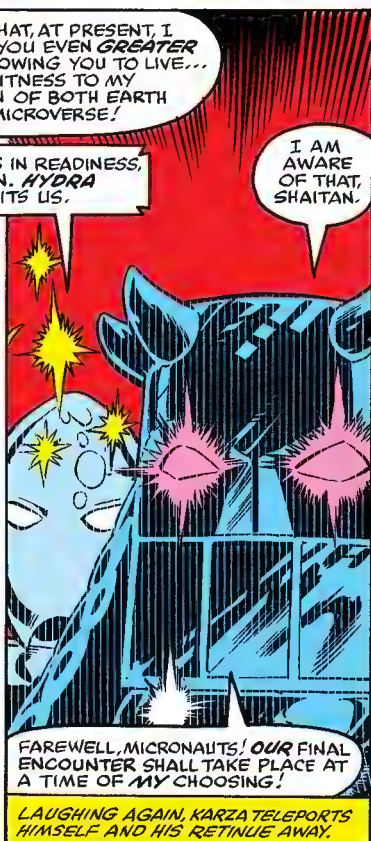
WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT YOUR *DEATHS* ARE MY MOST FERVENT DESIRE--



-- I KNOW THAT, AT PRESENT, I CAN CAUSE YOU EVEN *GREATER* PAIN BY ALLOWING YOU TO LIVE... HELPLESS WITNESS TO MY DOMINATION OF BOTH EARTH AND THE MICROVERSE!

ALL IS IN READINESS, BARON. *HYDRA* AWAITS US.

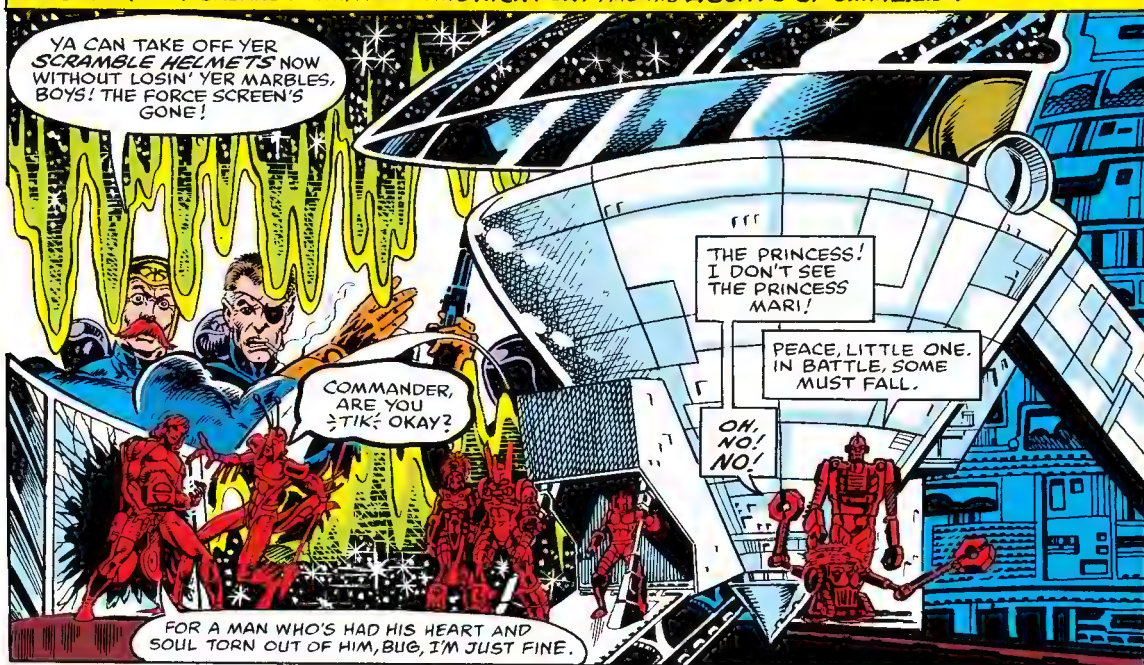
I AM AWARE OF THAT, SHAITAN.



FAREWELL, MICRONAUTS! *OUR* FINAL ENCOUNTER SHALL TAKE PLACE AT A TIME OF *MY* CHOOSING!

LAUGHING AGAIN, KARZA TELEPORTS HIMSELF AND HIS RETINUE AWAY.

WITH THE VANISHMENT OF THE MICROVERSIAN MASTER OF MENACE, THE PSYCHEDELIC FORCE SCREEN SURROUNDING THE ESPER UNIT BREAKS DOWN, ADMITTING NICK FURY AND HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!



YA CAN TAKE OFF YER SCRAMBLE HELMETS NOW WITHOUT LOSIN' YER MARBLES. BOYS! THE FORCE SCREEN'S GONE!

COMMANDER, ARE YOU Δ TIK Δ OKAY?

THE PRINCESS! I DON'T SEE THE PRINCESS MARI!

PEACE, LITTLE ONE. IN BATTLE, SOME MUST FALL.

OH, NO! NO!

FOR A MAN WHO'S HAD HIS HEART AND SOUL TORN OUT OF HIM, BUG, I'M JUST FINE.



AWRIGHT, WE'VE KNOWN ABOUT YER MICROVERSE FOR QUITE AWHILE. EVEN SENT THE FANTASTIC FOUR TA RECONNOITER--

--THOUGH THEY WERE LESS THAN COOPERATIVE.

*MICRONAUTS #15-17-- LOUISE.



SO TELL ME ABOUT THIS KARZA JOKER. WE HEARD HIS FAREWELL SPEECH, BUT DO WE REALLY HAVETA WORRY ABOUT A SIX-INCH HIGH HITLER?

YOU DO IF YOU WISH TO SAVE YOUR WORLD, COL. FURY.

KARZA STOLE THE ALL-POWERFUL ENIGMA FORCE FROM MY MIND. FAIL TO STOP HIM BEFORE HE LEARNS TO USE IT--



--AND YOU WILL LOSE EARTH AS SURELY AS I LOST... MARIONETTE.

THE MICROVERSE-- A SUB-ATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM, SEPARATED FROM OUR REALITY BY A BARRIER CALLED THE SPACEWALL! HERE MOLECULAR WORLDS WHIRL IN MAD PROFUSION! HERE A RIOTOUS RANGE OF RACES LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES! WATCHING OVER ALL STANDS A STRANGE GUARDIAN--**TIME TRAVELER**--A DWELLER IN DREAMS, EMISSARY OF THE ENIGMA FORCE WHO, IT IS SAID, APPEARS IN TIMES OF GATHERING DARKNESS TO LEAD MEN BACK TO THE LIGHT!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

ALL IS DARKNESS NOW-- THERE IS NO LIGHT-- NO SOOTHING VOICE-- NO GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE MICROVERSE!

THE TIME TRAVELERS HAVE BEEN BOUND TO BARON KARZA'S MIND FORCE. THE ENIGMA FORCE ITSELF IS IN PERIL!

BUT ALL MICRONAUT MARIONETTE KNOWS AS HER WORLD WHIRLS AROUND HER IS THAT BARON KARZA LIVES... AND THAT THE FUTURE HAS NEVER LOOKED SO GRIM!



REDUCED TO ATOMS, THAT'S WHAT KARZA SAID!



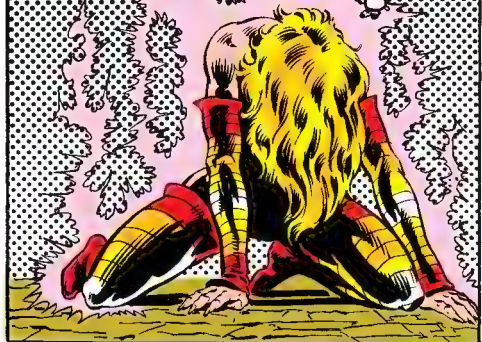
FOR THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPERS IT MEANT A HORRIBLE DEATH!



BUT CAN KARZA HAVE GUESSED THAT, FOR ME, IT MEANT SHRINKING BACK TO SUB-ATOMIC SIZE--

--BREACHING THE SPACEWALL--

--AND RETURNING TO THE MICROVERSE?

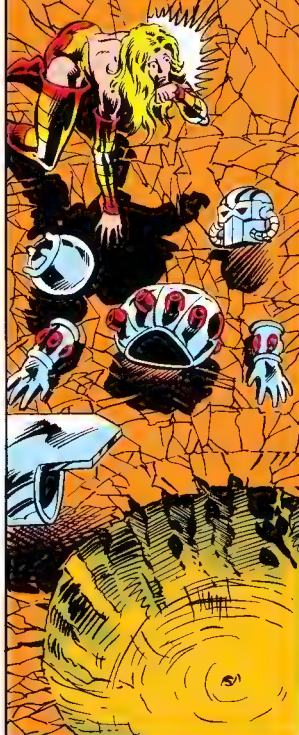


FINDING SOLID GROUND BENEATH HER AT LAST, THE PRINCESS MARI OPENS HER EYES AND LOOKS OUT OVER A NIGHTMARISH LANDSCAPE.

WHERE IN THE MICROVERSE AM I? ON MY OWN PLANET HOME-- WORLD, OR ON SOME SEPSIS FORSAKEN ASTEROID...?!

WAIT! THAT ARMOR LYING BY THE EDGE OF THAT BURN-BLACKENED CRATER--!

IT'S THE **FORCE COMMANDER** ARMOR, WORN BY MY BROTHER, **PRINCE ARGON**! HE... HE MUST HAVE CONTESTED KARZA'S RESURRECTION... AND FALLEN IN BATTLE!



HER ANGUISHED CRY IS OVER-HEARD BY A SQUAD OF OSTRARIDING DESERT DEMONS.

'TIS THE PRINCESS MARI-- ARGON'S **SISTER**! SOMEHOW SHE'S RETURNED TO THE MICROVERSE! BUT WHEN? AND HOW? AND WHY?

WE WILL **LEARN** THAT SOON ENOUGH, SLUG. AND WE WILL HAVE TO TELL HER THE **TRUTH** ABOUT HER BROTHERS FATE!



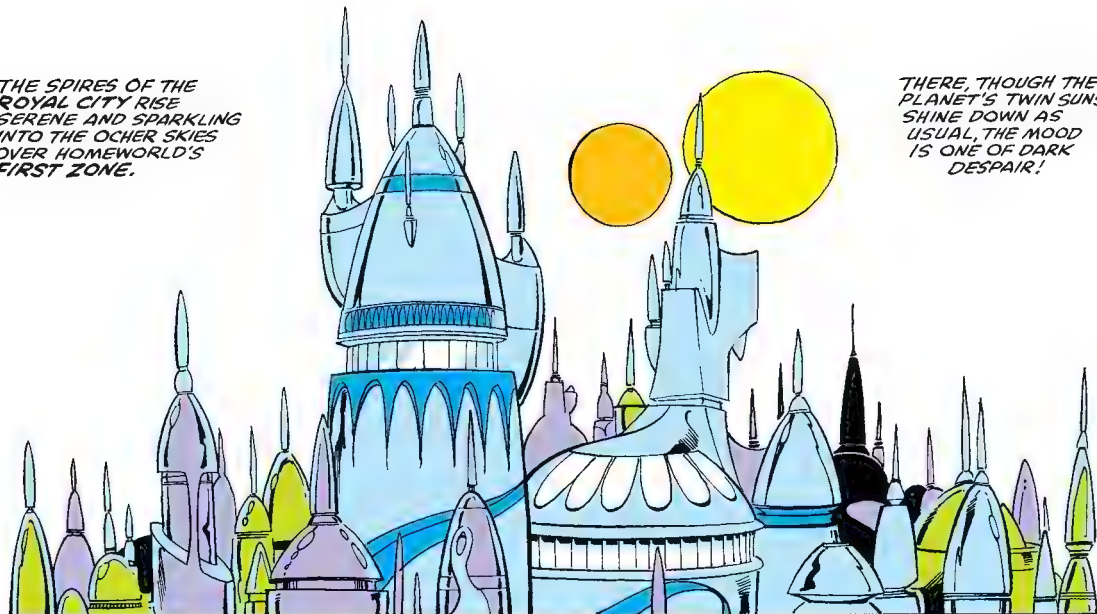
THAT THE MAN WHO WAS HER BROTHER AND MY LOVER HAS BECOME A **HOST-BODY** FOR BARON KARZA? SPARE HER THAT, AT LEAST, UNTIL WE REACH THE **ROYAL CITY**!

OH, ARGON! ARGON!



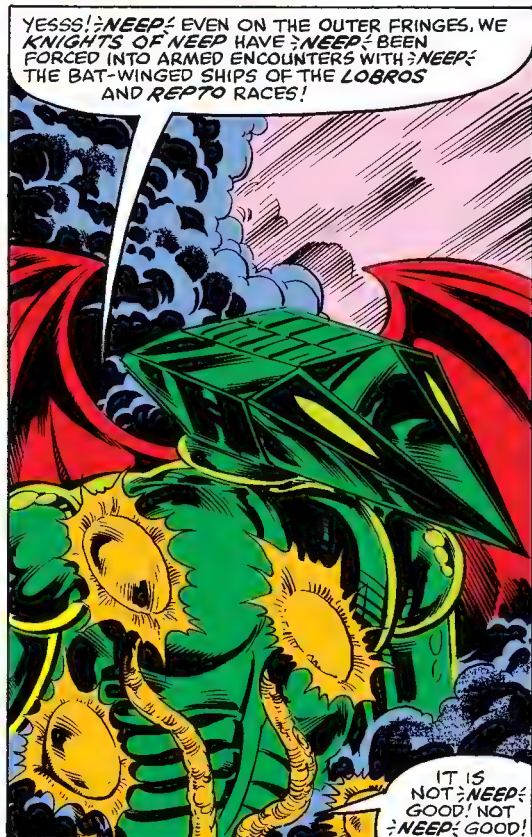
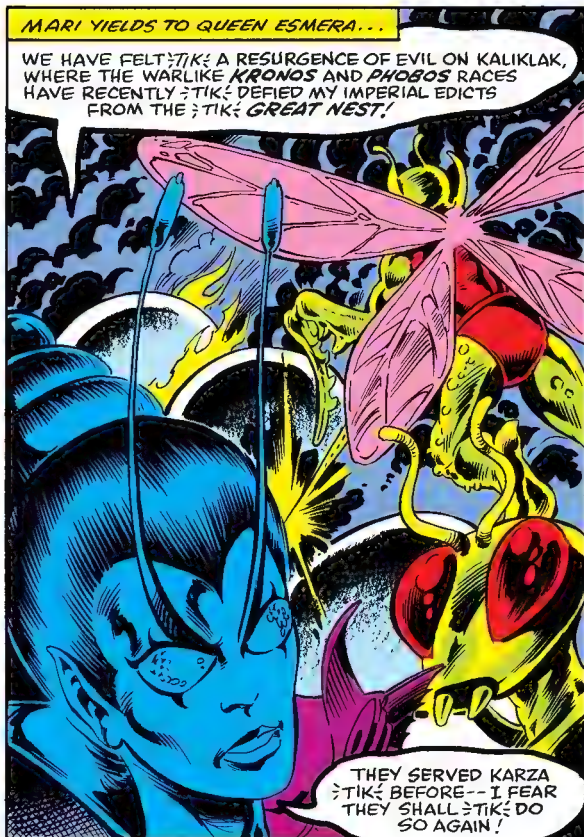
THE SPIRES OF THE ROYAL CITY RISE SERENE AND SPARKLING INTO THE OCHER SKIES OVER HOMEWORLD'S FIRST ZONE.

THERE, THOUGH THE PLANET'S TWIN SUNS SHINE DOWN AS USUAL, THE MOOD IS ONE OF DARK DESPAIR!



IN THE ROYAL PALACE, 48 XATS AFTER MARIONETTE'S RETURN TO HOMEWORLD, AN AUGUST ASSEMBLAGE GATHERS TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE.

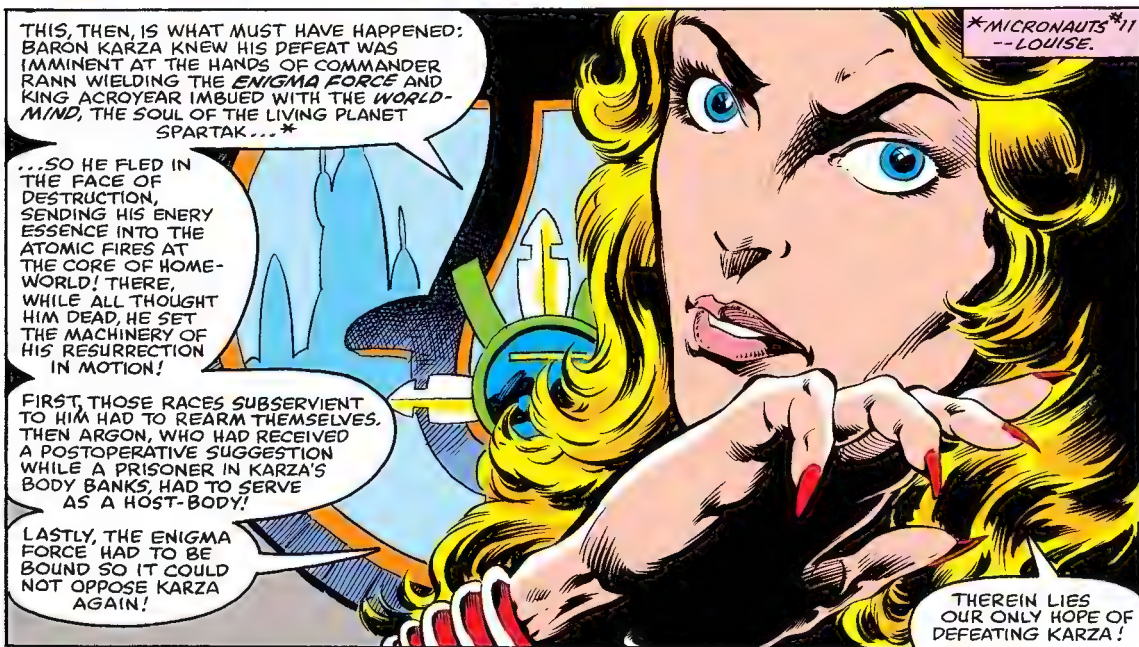






TO WHICH I CAN ONLY ADD THAT WHICH IS ALREADY KNOWN.

ON SPARTAK, A STRANGE GROUP OF FACELESS PRIESTS INVADDED THE SACRED TEMPLE OF THE ROCK AND RESURRECTED THE SLAIN PRINCE SHAITAN, ALBINO BROTHER OF MY LORD, KING ACROYEAR.



THIS, THEN, IS WHAT MUST HAVE HAPPENED: BARON KARZA KNEW HIS DEFEAT WAS IMMINENT AT THE HANDS OF COMMANDER RANN WIELDING THE ENIGMA FORCE AND KING ACROYEAR IMBUED WITH THE WORLD-MIND, THE SOUL OF THE LIVING PLANET SPARTAK...*

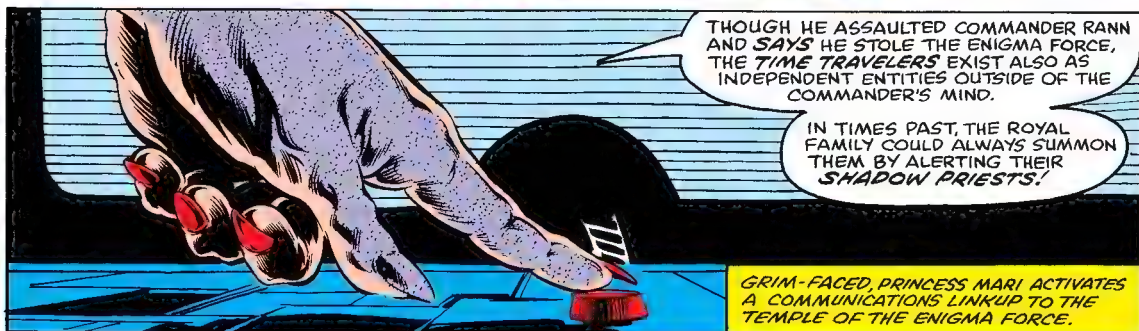
*MICRONAUTS #11
-- LOUISE.

...SO HE FLED IN THE FACE OF DESTRUCTION, SENDING HIS ENERY ESSENCE INTO THE ATOMIC FIRES AT THE CORE OF HOME-WORLD! THERE, WHILE ALL THOUGHT HIM DEAD, HE SET THE MACHINERY OF HIS RESURRECTION IN MOTION!

FIRST, THOSE RACES SUBSERVIENT TO HIM HAD TO REARM THEMSELVES. THEN ARGON, WHO HAD RECEIVED A POSTOPERATIVE SUGGESTION WHILE A PRISONER IN KARZA'S BODY BANKS, HAD TO SERVE AS A HOST-BODY!

LASTLY, THE ENIGMA FORCE HAD TO BE BOUND SO IT COULD NOT OPPOSE KARZA AGAIN!

THEREIN LIES OUR ONLY HOPE OF DEFEATING KARZA!

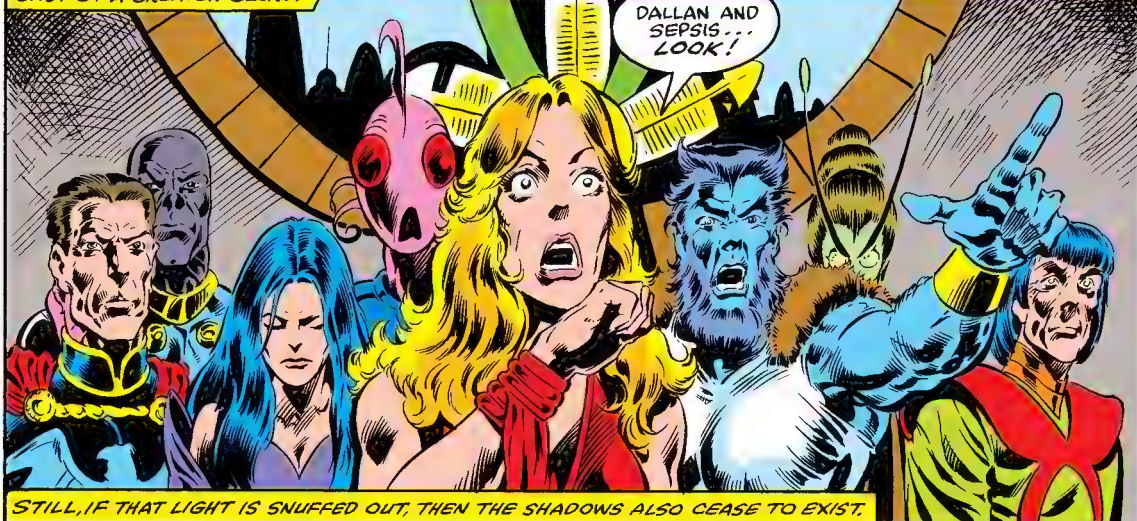


THOUGH HE ASSAULTED COMMANDER RANN AND SAYS HE STOLE THE ENIGMA FORCE, THE TIME TRAVELERS EXIST ALSO AS INDEPENDENT ENTITIES OUTSIDE OF THE COMMANDER'S MIND.

IN TIMES PAST, THE ROYAL FAMILY COULD ALWAYS SUMMON THEM BY ALERTING THEIR SHADOW PRIESTS!

GRIM-FACED, PRINCESS MARI ACTIVATES A COMMUNICATIONS LINKUP TO THE TEMPLE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE.

THE SHADOW PRIESTS WERE SO NAMED BECAUSE WHILE THE TIME TRAVELERS ARE FILLED WITH THE LIGHT OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, THE PRIESTS THEMSELVES ARE MERE SERVANTS OF THE LIGHT... SHADOWS CAST BY A GREATER GLORY!



STILL, IF THAT LIGHT IS SNUFFED OUT, THEN THE SHADOWS ALSO CEASE TO EXIST.

GREETINGS, CITIZENS OF THE MICROVERSE! AS YOU CAN SEE, THE ENIGMA FORCE IS MINE!

GRIEVE NOT FOR THE TIME TRAVELERS, BUT RATHER FOR YOURSELVES -- FOR SOON YOU WILL JOIN THEM IN BONDAGE!

CURSE YOU KARZA!

I MUST RETURN TO THE NEST, THERE TO ARM MY INSECTIVORIDS FOR BATTLE!

WITH KARZA IN COMMAND OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, IT MAY WELL BE THE LAST WAR ANY OF US WILL EVER FIGHT.



NEXT MONTH:
TO SNARE
MEN'S SOULS!

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THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS



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Space Glider. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Microtron. Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

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THE MICRONAUTS!



TO SNARE MEN'S SOULS!

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WRITERS-STORYTELLERS-ARTIST INKER BOB SHAREN, COLORS EDITOR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE ASSEMBLED HORDES OF HYDRA HAVE ALL SEEN YOUR TELECAST NOW, BARON KARZA.

MASTER, CAN YOU TRUST IN THE LOYALTY OF YOUR EARTH AGENTS?

I PLACE MY TRUST IN NO MAN, SHAITAN--WHETHER HE BE OF EARTH OR OUR MICROVERSE.

THAT IS WHY MY BROADCAST WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A SUBLIMINAL *MIND-CONTROL* MESSAGE.

THE EARTH-LINGS WILL SERVE ME AS IF SUCH WERE THEIR OWN WILL--THEIR OWN DESIRE.

YET THEY OBEY ONLY *YOU*, MASTER--IGNORING ME, WHO WAS TO BE YOUR GENERAL! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT SUCH WAS TO BE MY REWARD FOR EFFECTING YOUR DELIVERANCE FROM THE RAGING ATOMIC FIRES OF HOMEWORLD TO WHICH THE ENIGMA FORCE CONDEMNED YOU?

IT WAS MY OWN INTELLECT-- TRANSFORMED TO PUREST ENERGY-- WHICH ENABLED ME TO PLAN FOR AND CARRY OUT MY OWN RESURRECTION, SHAITAN!

I RAISED *YOU* FROM THE DEAD, SHAITAN, THAT YOU MIGHT BRING MY PREVIOUSLY PROGRAMMED *HOST-BODY* TO ME... AND YOU ALMOST FAILED AT EVEN THAT SIMPLE TASK!

AT A MENTAL COMMAND, KARZA'S METALLIC FIST SHOOTS FROM HIS WRIST--

PWOOM!

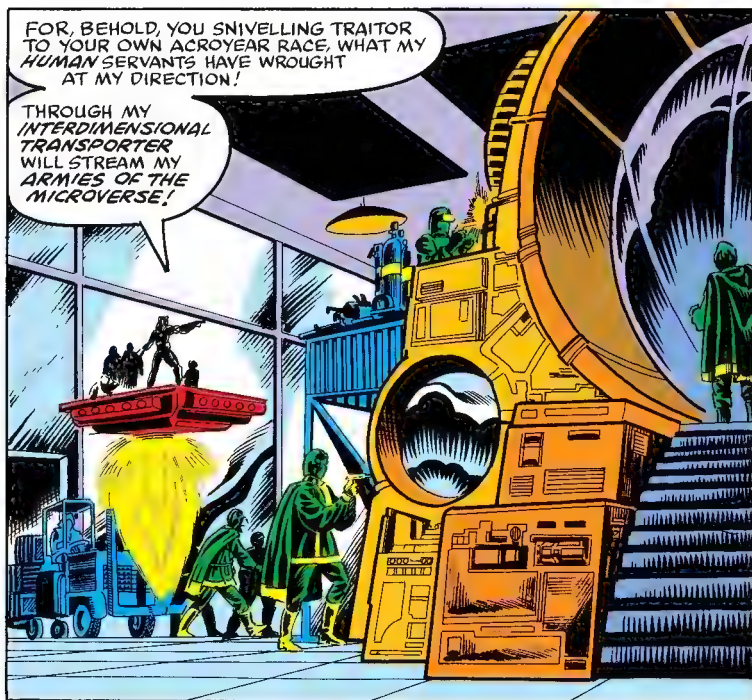
--PUMMELING SHAITAN UNMERCIFULLY!

M-MASTER, PLEASE--!

SO, SHAITAN, YOUR REWARD IS THAT I DO NOT RETURN YOU TO THE GRAVE!

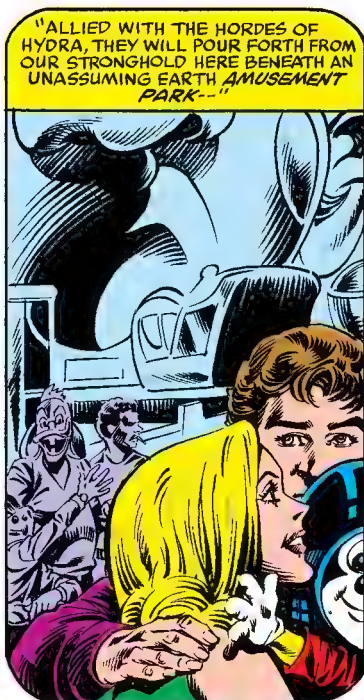
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU ONCE AGAIN FORGET YOUR PLACE AS THE LEAST AMONG MY SERVANTS!

YAAGH!



FOR, BEHOLD, YOU SNIVELLING TRAITOR TO YOUR OWN ACROYEAR RACE, WHAT MY HUMAN SERVANTS HAVE WROUGHT AT MY DIRECTION!

THROUGH MY INTERDIMENSIONAL TRANSPORTER WILL STREAM MY ARMIES OF THE MICROVERSE!



"ALLIED WITH THE HORDES OF HYDRA, THEY WILL POUR FORTH FROM OUR STRONGHOLD HERE BENEATH AN UNASSUMING EARTH AMUSEMENT PARK--"



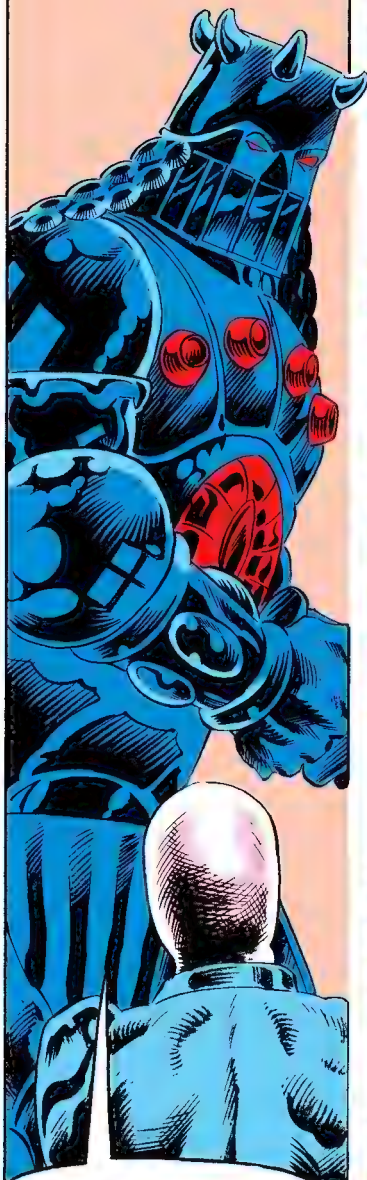
--TO WREAK SUCH HAVOC AS THIS WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN!



THEN, SHAITAN, WITH EARTH UNDER MY DOMINION, I WILL TURN MY FORCES BACK AGAINST THE MICROVERSE!

WILL--WILL YOU AT LEAST ALLOW **ME** TO KILL MY BROTHER, ACROYEAR, IN REVENGE FOR HIS SLAYING OF ME?

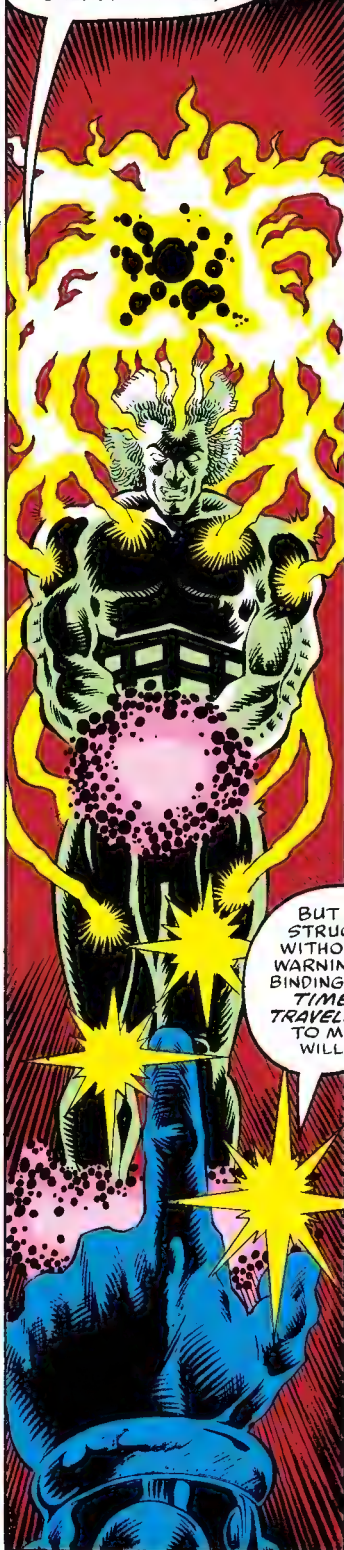
KING ACROYEAR? AYE, IT WAS HE WHO DARED EMPLOY THE *WORLD MIND*--THE *SOUL* OF THE ACROYEAR PLANET *SPARTAK*--AGAINST ME! IN UNION WITH THE *ENIGMA FORCE*, HE HELPED ENGINEER MY DEFEAT!*



THERE WERE TWO REASONS I CHOSE EARTH AS A BATTLE-GROUND AND NOT THE MICROVERSE! HERE THE *WORLD MIND* COULD NOT ENTER THE FRAY WITHOUT RISKING EXPENDING THAT PLANETARY ENERGY NEEDED TO MAINTAIN LIFE ON *SPARTAK*!

*REMEMBER THE NOW-CLASSIC *MICRONAUTS* #11?--LOUISE.

AND HERE DWELT *COMMANDER RANN*, LEADER OF THE *MICRONAUTS*! IN HIS MIND LAY HIDDEN THE POWER OF THE *ENIGMA FORCE* AND THE MEANS TO SUMMON FORTH THE *TIME TRAVELERS*, ITS ETHEREAL ENERGY ENTITIES!



BUT I STRUCK WITHOUT WARNING, BINDING THE *TIME TRAVELERS* TO MY WILL!

SO DO YOU SEE HOW UNIMPORTANT YOUR PETTY DREAMS OF FRATRICIDE ARE TO ONE WHO HAS STOLEN POWER ENOUGH TO SUBJUGATE TWO SOLAR SYSTEMS, *SHAITAN*? YOUR BROTHER WILL DIE A MOST AGONIZING DEATH--BUT VENGEANCE SHALL BELONG TO *BARON KARZA* ALONE!

YOU ARE WRONG TO MISUSE ONE WHO HAS SO SELFLESSLY SERVED YOU, MASTER--FOR, IF I CANNOT CLAIM MY REVENGE, NEITHER SHALL YOU CLAIM YOURS!



HATRED TWISTS THE THOUGHTS OF THE ALBINO ACROYEAR TOWARDS A SCHEME THAT MAY SPELL EARTH'S SALVATION.

UNAWARE THAT THEY HAVE AN UNWITTING ALLY... A TRAITOR IN THE VERY HEART OF KARZA'S ENCAMPMENT... THE GUARDIANS OF EARTH MEET WITH THE HEROES OF THE MICROVERSE TO PLAN THEIR MUTUAL DEFENSE IN THE GIANT HOVERING HELICARRIER OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION...

...BETTER KNOWN AS
S.H.I.E.L.D.

AWRIGHT, DO WE KEEP PLAYIN' **RING AROUND THE ROSIE**--OR DO WE HELP EACH OTHER DEFEAT THIS KARZA JOKER?

COLONEL FURY, WE HAVE ONLY THE WORD OF THESE ADMITTEDLY **EXTRAORDINARY** EXTRATERRESTRIALS THAT IT IS **KARZA** WHO IS A THREAT TO EARTH...AND NOT **THEY!**

DECEPTION **IS** A POSSIBILITY, WE AT S.H.I.E.L.D. WERE CONSIDERING USING THE DENIZENS OF THE MICROVERSE FOR OUR OWN ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES.

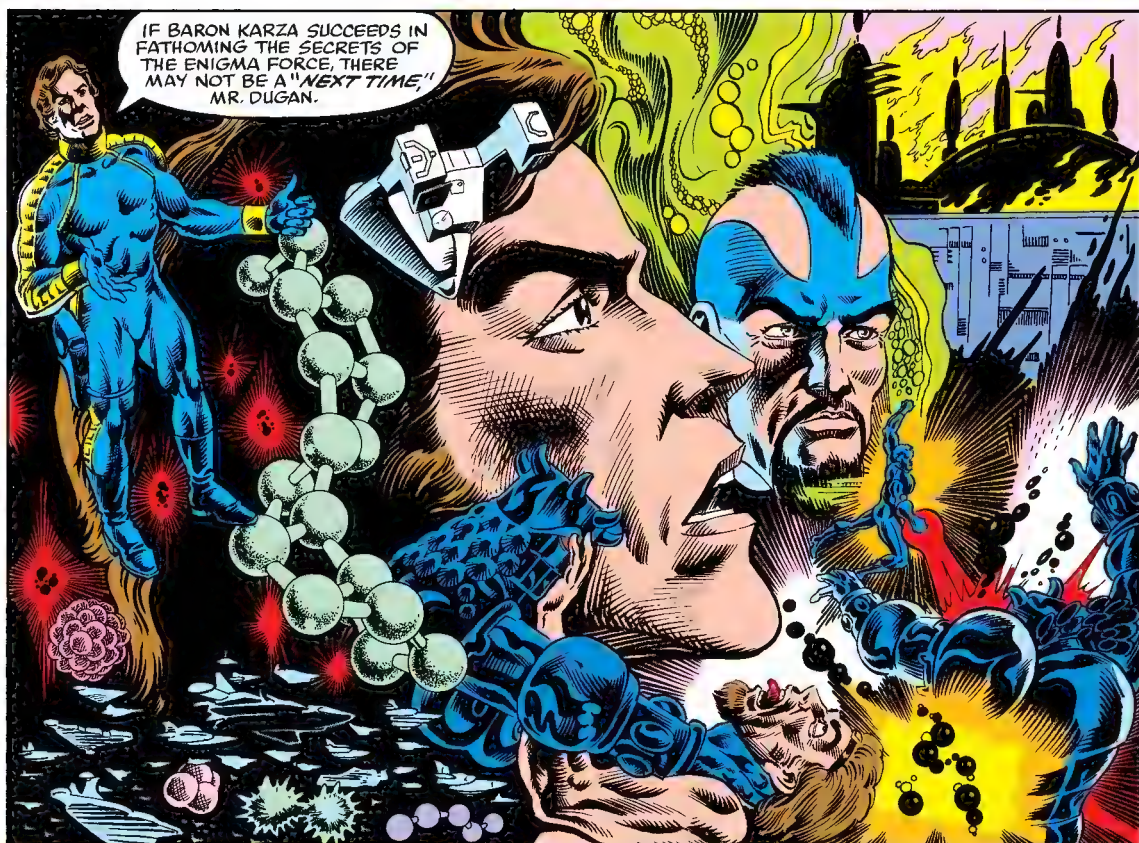
'SCUSE ME, DOC-- BUT ARE YOU SAYING THE MICRONAUTS MIGHT BE "**MOLES**"-- DECOY DOUBLE-AGENTS SICCED ON US BY HYDRA?

I THINK THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE DOC'S SAYIN', GABE-- BUT DUM DUM DUGAN AIN'T BUYIN' IT!

THE MICROS SAVED OUR HIDES WHEN HYDRA INVADED THE HELI-CARRIER!

I WISH THAT WERE TRUE, BUT WE MICRONAUTS FAILED TO ANTICIPATE KARZA'S RESURRECTION AND WERE UNABLE TO FORESTALL HIS ARRIVAL ON EARTH, HIS SEIZURE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, HIS SLAYING OF MARIONETTE, OR HIS ALLIANCE WITH HYDRA!

SO YOU'LL DO BETTER NEXT TIME!



IF BARON KARZA SUCCEEDS IN FATHOMING THE SECRETS OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, THERE MAY NOT BE A "NEXT TIME," MR. DUGAN.

COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN GOES ON TO DESCRIBE TO THE ENGROSSED S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS HOW HIS FORMER TEACHER, BARON KARZA, UNLEASHED A THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF TERROR ON THE MICROVERSE, SLAYING RANN'S PARENTS AND SACRIFICING MILLIONS MORE TO HIS ACCURSED BODY BANKS...UNTIL RANN RETURNED TO HOMEWORLD FROM HIS EXPLORATORY SPACE MISSION, WIELDING THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE AND BROUGHT ABOUT THE BARON'S OVERTHROW!



THE ENIGMA FORCE-- IS IT REALLY AS POWERFUL AS ALL THAT?

IN BARON KARZA'S HANDS, IT COULD ONLY DEAL DESTRUCTION.

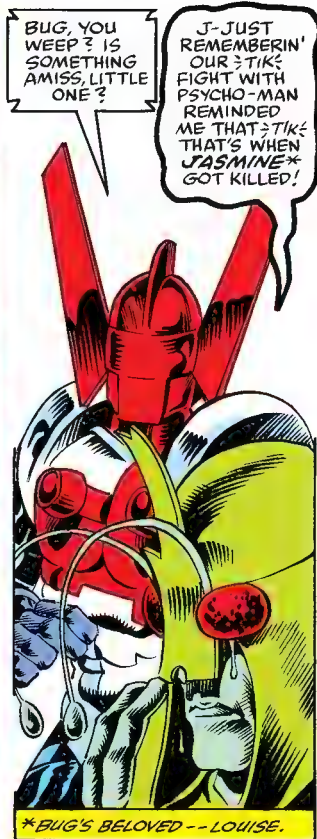
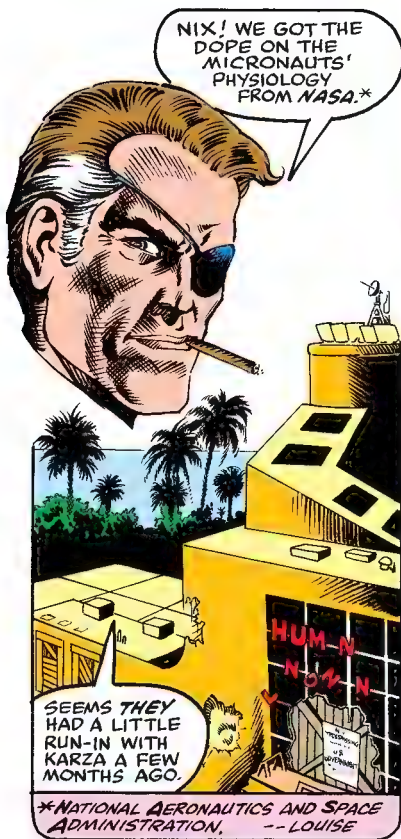
YA 3TIK3 MEAN, THERE'D BE NO MORE 3TIK3 ME??!

INTACT, IT IS THE ESSENCE OF LIFE. DESTROYED, THE VERY FABRIC OF EXISTENCE MIGHT WELL COLLAPSE.

HE'D REDUCE US ALL TO ATOMS, LIKE HE DID TO MY MISTRESS MARIONETTE.

I STILL ASK, WHAT IF THESE BEINGS ARE LMDs-- LIFE-MODEL DECOYS-- PLANTED ON THE HELICARRIER TO SPY FOR HYDRA?

THERE, THERE, MICROTON.



SOON, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HOMEWORLD MICROSHIP ENDEAVOR...

WHAT'S THE POINT OF READYING OURSELVES FOR BATTLE? WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE BOUND TO HIS WILL, KARZA'S ALREADY WON!

PRINCESS MARI WOULD WANT US TO FIGHT ON, COMMANDER!



SHE FOUGHT, MICROTRON-- AND IT GOT HER KILLED!

THE REST OF US WERE 3TK2 TRYIN'TA GET THROUGH KARZA'S PSYCHEDELIC FORCE SCREEN, COMMANDER, SO WE DIDN'T 3TK2 SEE WHAT HAPPENED.

KARZA HAD JUST ARRIVED ON EARTH VIA THE MIND-BRIDGE OPENED BY S.H.I.E.L.D.'S ESPER SENSITIVES. SEIZING ME, HE TORE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE FROM MY MIND BEFORE I COULD SET UP ANY DEFENSES.

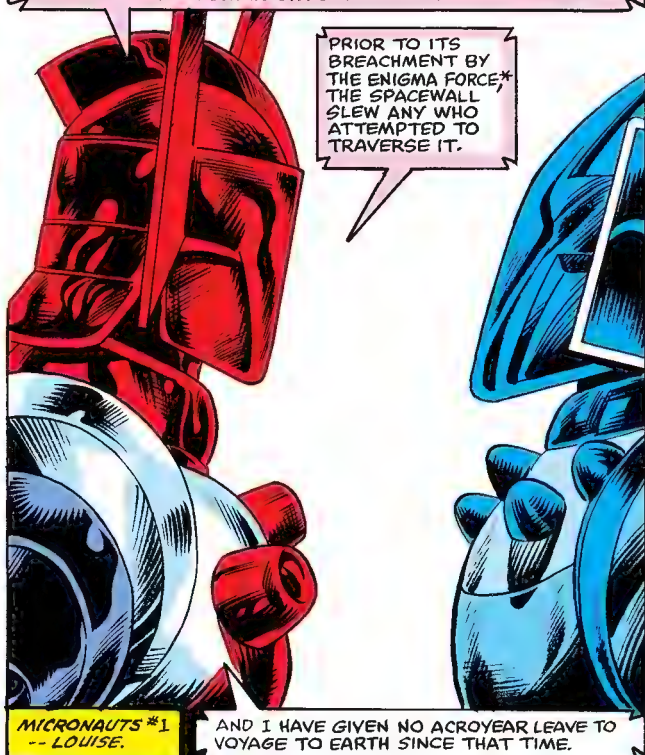


THEN HE LAUGHED THAT METALLIC, MANIACAL LAUGH OF HIS AND REDUCED MARIONETTE AND THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ESPERS TO ATOMS!



HE VAPORIZED THE WOMAN I LOVED RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES!

PERHAPS THERE IS YET HOPE, COMMANDER. MANY WHO **SHOULD** HAVE DIED YET LIVE--MY BROTHER SHAITAN, FOR INSTANCE; AND THIS ACROYEAR WARRIOR BUG ENCOUNTERED IN A S.H.I.E.L.D. LABORATORY.



PRIOR TO ITS BREACHMENT BY THE ENIGMA FORCE*, THE SPACEWALL SLEW ANY WHO ATTEMPTED TO TRAVERSE IT.

MICRONAUTS #1
-- LOUISE.

AND I HAVE GIVEN NO ACROYEAR LEAVE TO VOYAGE TO EARTH SINCE THAT TIME.

FORGIVE ME, MY KING, BUT I AM DAGON-- CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD OF THE SACRED TEMPLE OF THE ROCK WHEREIN YOUR BROTHER LAY ENTOMBED.

FOLLOWING HIS RESURRECTION, THE ELDER COUNCIL DISPATCHED ME TO YOU WITH THE NEWS.

BUT MY SHIP CRASHED UPON ARRIVAL ON EARTH, AND I LAPPED INTO A COMA WHEN A LIFE PRESERVING SPRAY KEPT ME FROM DEATH.

I 3TIK3 FOUND HIM--PRE-SERVED IN 3TIK3 AMBER!

A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION.

BUT MY BIOTRONIC SENSORS REVEAL THAT THIS DAGON IS NOT WHAT HE PURPORTS TO BE. A MIND-PROBE WOULD REVEAL ALL--

-- BUT ALL THAT REMAINS OF MY TELEPATHIC ABILITIES AFTER KARZA'S THEFT OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, IS THE MIND-LINK I SHARE WITH COMMANDER RANN.

NEITHER OF US CAN NOW MONITOR THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS.

I WILL NOT INTRUDE UPON THE COMMANDER'S GRIEF WITH MY DISCOVERY OF DAGON'S DUPLICITY-- BUT WILL WATCH HIM CLOSELY IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN HIS PURPOSE IN JOINING THE MICRONAUTS.

I PLACE PALM TO PALM IN WELCOME, DAGON, AND PRAY YOU HAVE NOT SURVIVED YOUR ORDEAL MERELY TO DIE IN BATTLE.

IF THAT IS HOW I MAY SERVE YOU, MY KING-- THEN SO BE IT.

AT THAT MOMENT, THE RUGGED FEATURES OF THE DIRECTOR OF S.H.I.E.L.D. APPEAR ON THE ENDEAVOR'S COMMUNICATIONS SCREENS...

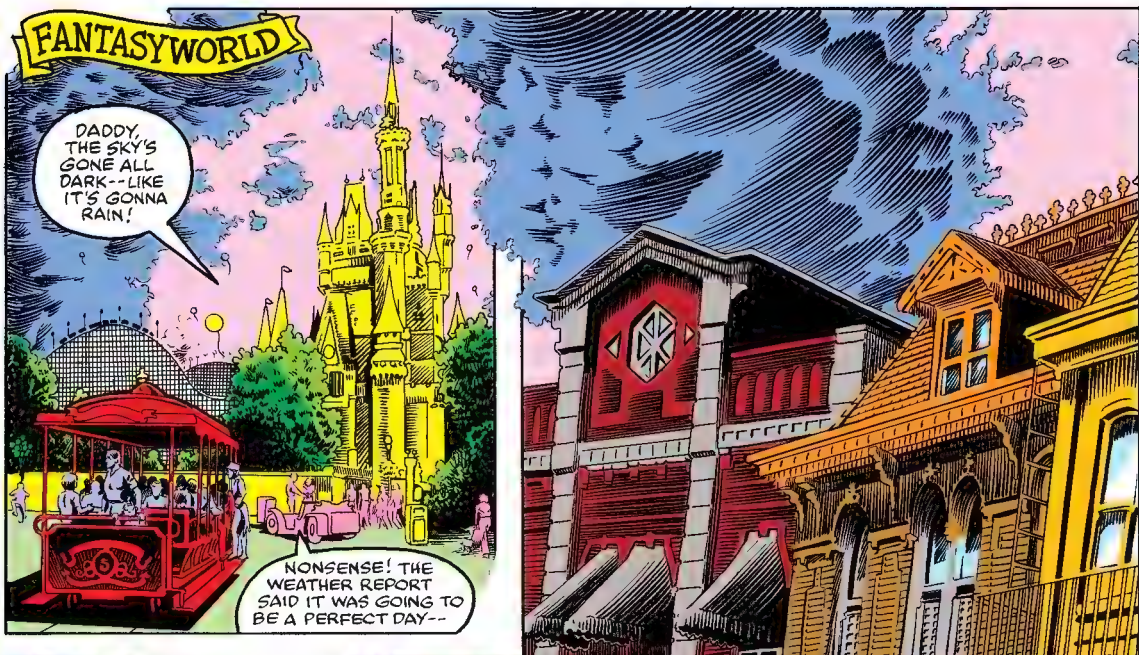
FURY HERE, RANN! THE HELICARRIER'S SWINGIN' SOUTH TA CONVERGE ON KARZA AN' HIS HIDDEN HYDRA HIDEOUT!

BOTH KARZA AND THE MICRONAUTS FIRST APPEARED ON EARTH IN YOUR STATE OF FLORIDA, COMMANDER!

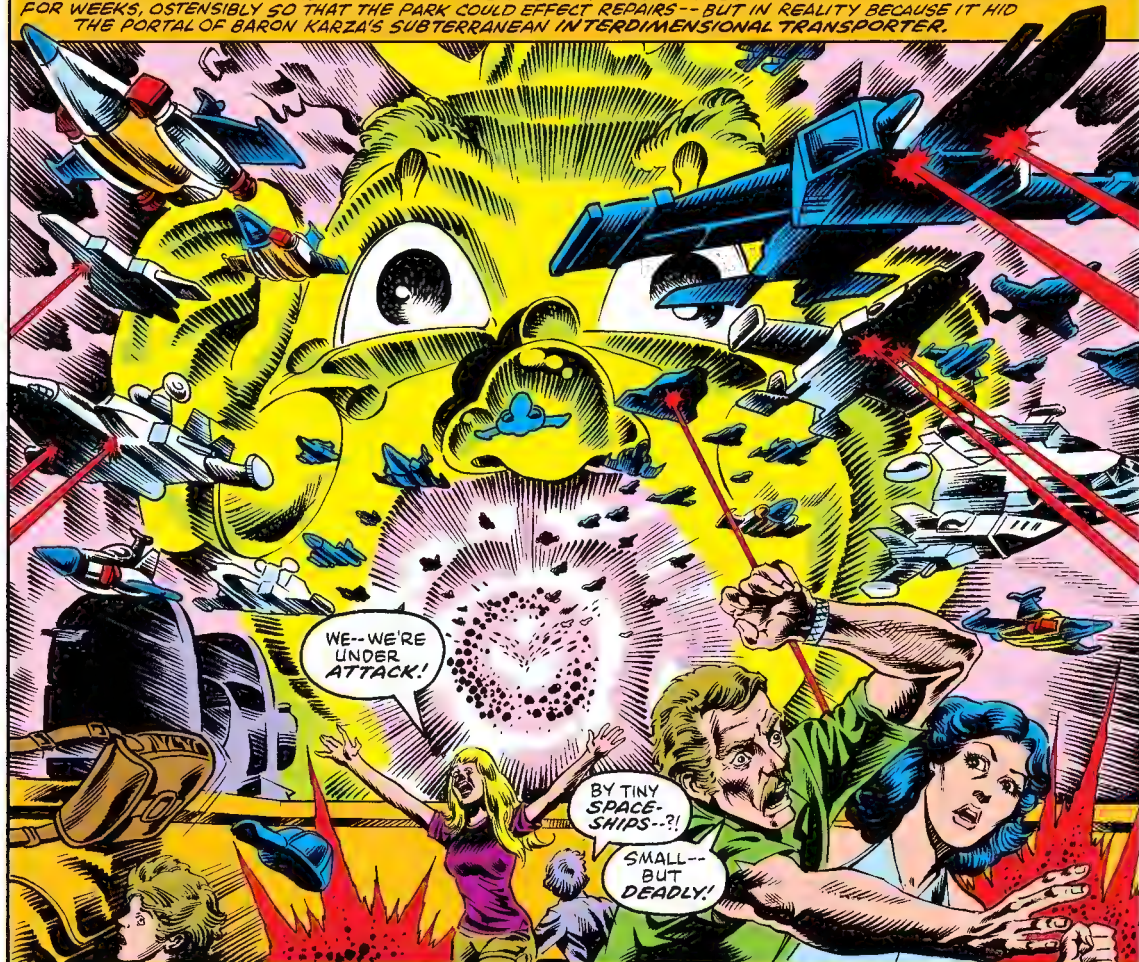
THERE MUST BE A WEAKNESS THERE WHERE THE SPACEWALL BORDERS ON YOUR UNIVERSE THAT KARZA INTENDS TO EXPLOIT!

IF THERE IS, THEN IT MUST MOVE ABOUT, COMMANDER-- CAUSE THE LAST TIME KARZA CAME THROUGH IT, HE WOUND UP AT CAPE CANAVERAL!

THIS TIME WE'RE GETTIN' A HIGH ENERGY READOUT FROM SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FANTASYWORLD AMUSEMENT PARK!



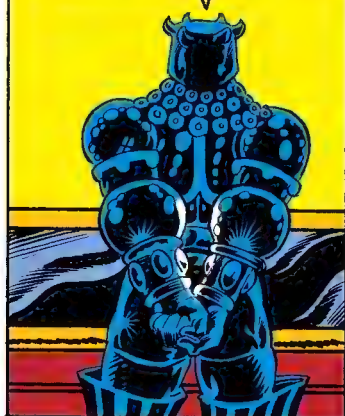
THE Gaping clown mouth is the point of egress for the Fantasy World Fun House. It has been closed for weeks, ostensibly so that the park could effect repairs-- but in reality because it hid the portal of Baron Karza's subterranean interdimensional transporter.



NOW THE GRINNING FEATURES OPEN TO SPEW FORTH TERROR IN THE GUISE OF A MASSIVE MICROVERSIAN WAR-FLEET!

SO SURE IS HE OF THE OVERWHELMING FORCES UNDER HIS CONTROL, BARON KARZA DOES NOT EVEN WATCH AS HIS ASSAULT ON EARTH COMMENCES.

THE HYDRA SHOCK TROOPS HAVE NOW BEEN JOINED BY THOSE RACES AND RENEGADES OF THE MICROVERSE WHO REMAINED LOYAL TO ME.

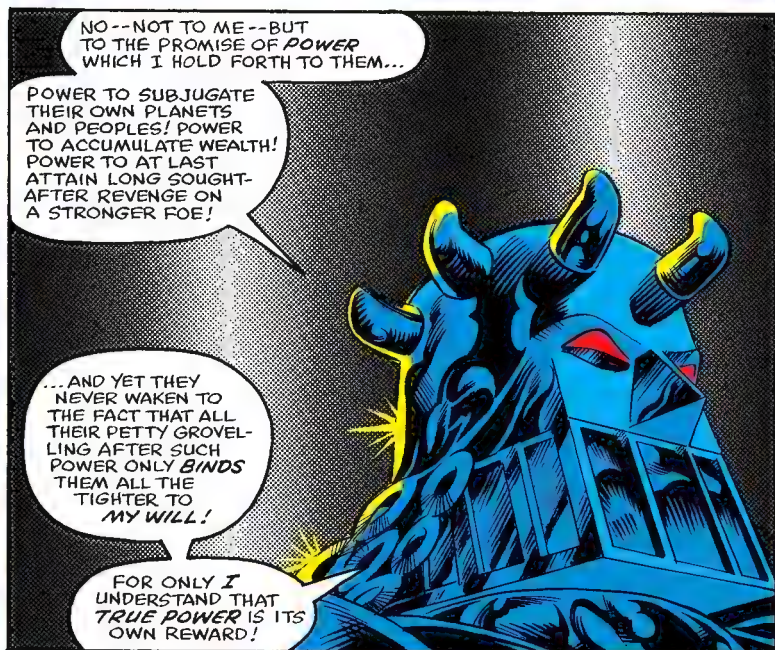


NO--NOT TO ME--BUT TO THE PROMISE OF POWER WHICH I HOLD FORTH TO THEM...

POWER TO SUBJUGATE THEIR OWN PLANETS AND PEOPLES! POWER TO ACCUMULATE WEALTH! POWER TO AT LAST ATTAIN LONG SOUGHT-AFTER REVENGE ON A STRONGER FOE!

...AND YET THEY NEVER WAKEN TO THE FACT THAT ALL THEIR PETTY GROVELING AFTER SUCH POWER ONLY BINDS THEM ALL THE TIGHTER TO MY WILL!

FOR ONLY I UNDERSTAND THAT TRUE POWER IS ITS OWN REWARD!



KARZA LAUGHS--A SOUND THAT HAS CHILLED A COSMOS--AND THEN TURNS AS IF REMEMBERING HE IS NOT ALONE.

OH--FORGIVE ME,
TIME TRAVELER.
I FEAR I HAVE BEEN
A NEGLECTFUL HOST.
DO THE ENERGY-
FEEDERS CAUSE
YOU MUCH PAIN?

I SUSPECT
THEY DO.
MOST UNFOR-
TUNATE--BUT
NECESSARY.

YOU REMAIN
MUTE, BUT I
KNOW THAT YOU
CAN HEAR ME--
SEE ME--

--THAT YOU UNDERSTOOD
ME JUST NOW WHEN I
DISCOURSED ON THE
NATURE OF POWER!

FOR YOU ARE *PUREST POWER*--A DIRECT
MANIFESTATION OF THE *UNIDPOWER*, THE
FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF ALL EXISTENCE--
THE EMISSARY OF THE *ENIGMA FORCE*
WHICH, ONCE FATHOMED, MAKES ALL THINGS
KNOWN, AND THUS LIABLE TO
DESTRUCTION!

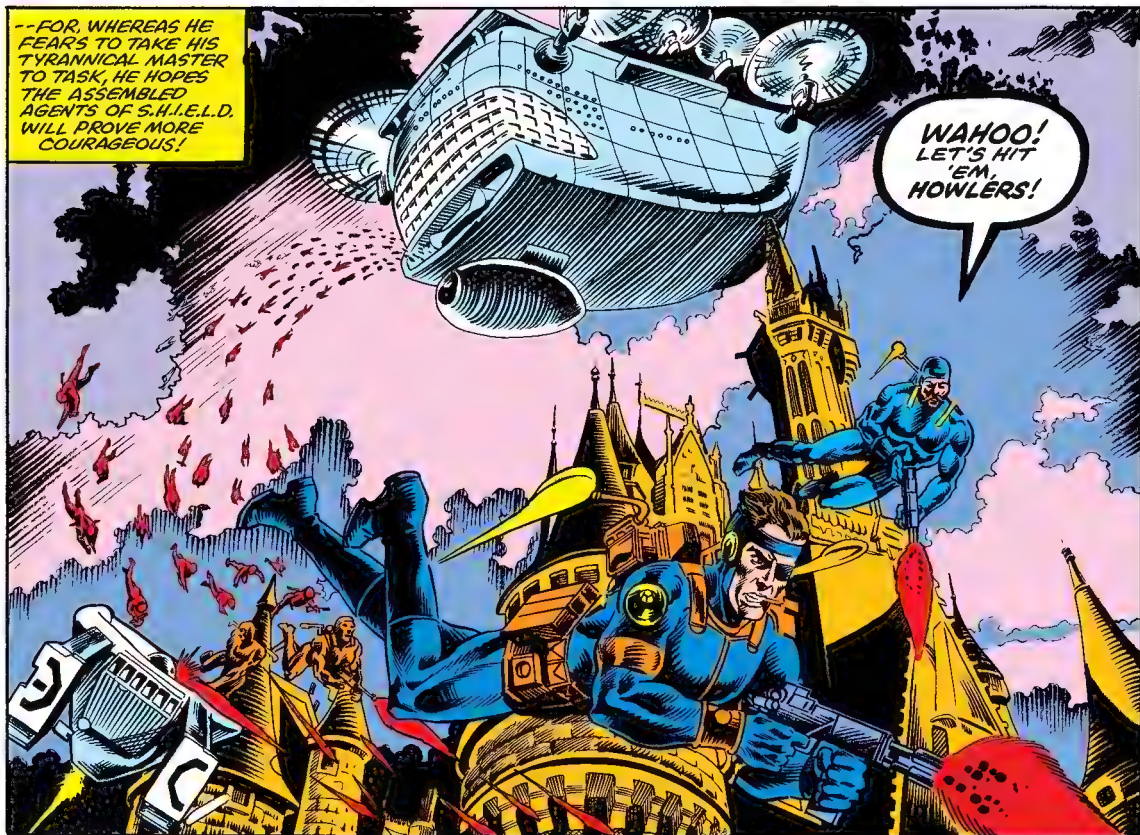
YOUR *MIND* REMAINS
CLOSED TO ME--SO FAR...
BUT YOUR *POWER* I HAVE
SIPHONED FROM YOU VIA
THE ENERGY-FEEDERS AND
USED TO TAKE CONTROL
OF THOSE MINDS, HERE
AND IN THE MICROVERSE,
WITH A NATURAL PRE-
DELICION FOR *EVIL*!

THERE ARE
SO *MANY*! THAT
IS WHY I SHALL
ULTIMATELY
CONQUER
OVER *ALL*!

YOU HAVE NOT
CONQUERED YET,
MASTER! LOOK
TO YOUR
VIEWScreens!

EH?

THERE IS A NOTE OF EXULTATION
IN SHAITAN'S VOICE--



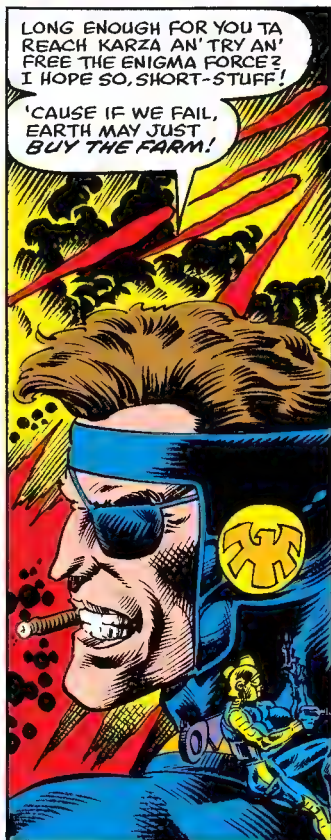
--FOR, WHEREAS HE FEARS TO TAKE HIS TYRANNICAL MASTER TO TASK, HE HOPES THE ASSEMBLED AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D. WILL PROVE MORE COURAGEOUS!

WAHOO!
LET'S HIT 'EM,
HOWLERS!



THIS AIN'T NORMANDY AN' HYDRA AIN'T THE NAZIS, DUM DUM-- BUT YER HEART'S IN THE RIGHT PLACE!

THE FORCES ARRAYED AGAINST YOU ARE ENORMOUS, COL. FURY! CAN YOU HOLD THEM?



LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TA REACH KARZA AN' TRY AN' FREE THE ENIGMA FORCE? I HOPE SO, SHORT-STUFF!

'CAUSE IF WE FAIL, EARTH MAY JUST BUY THE FARM!



THEN I LEAVE MY MICRONAUTS TO FIGHT BESIDE YOU, WHILE I GO TO BEARD THE BARON IN HIS LAIR!

VREET
YAARGH!



ABOARD THE ENDEAVOR...

I WISH THE COMMANDER HAD LET US ACCOMPANY HIM.

WHAT Δ TIK Δ FOR? IF KARZA CONTROLS THE ENIGMA FORCE...

THEN ONE MAN IS AS GOOD--OR AS USELESS--AS AN ARMY. COME, THE BATTLE AWAITS US.

MILORD, THE ENDEAVOR MUST BE SAFEGUARDED.

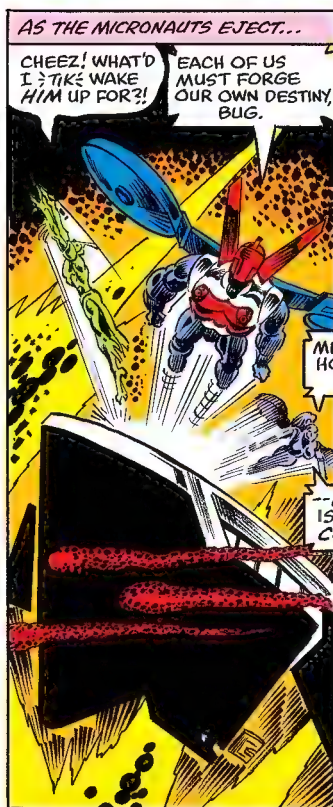
AND YOU WOULD STAY BEHIND, DAGON?



MOST STRANGE-- A WARRIOR OF SPARTAK CHOOSING NOT TO SOAR TO THE SOUND OF THE LASERS.

IN TIMES PAST, OUR RACE DEEMED SUCH HESITANCY COWARDICE-- AND PUNISHED IT BY DEATH.

BUT MY TIME AMONGST THE MICRONAUTS HAS MELLOWED MY WARRIOR INSTINCTS. DO AS YOU WILL, DAGON-- I WILL NOT FAULT YOU FOR FOREGOING THE BATTLE.



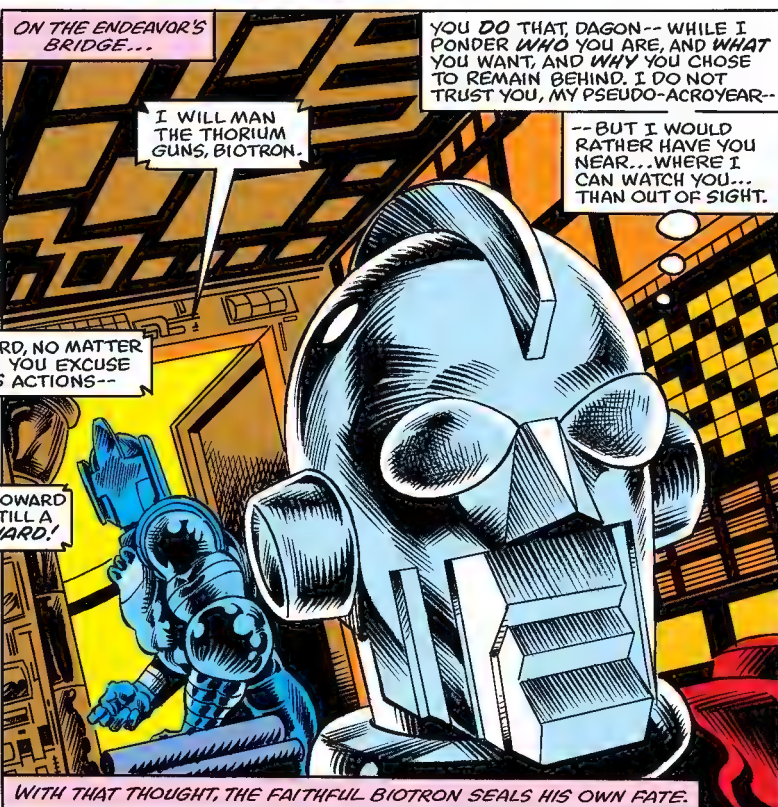
AS THE MICRONAUTS EJECT...

CHEEZ! WHAT'D I Δ TIK Δ WAKE HIM UP FOR?!

EACH OF US MUST FORGE OUR OWN DESTINY, BUG.

MILORD, NO MATTER HOW YOU EXCUSE HIS ACTIONS--

--A COWARD IS STILL A COWARD!



ON THE ENDEAVOR'S BRIDGE...

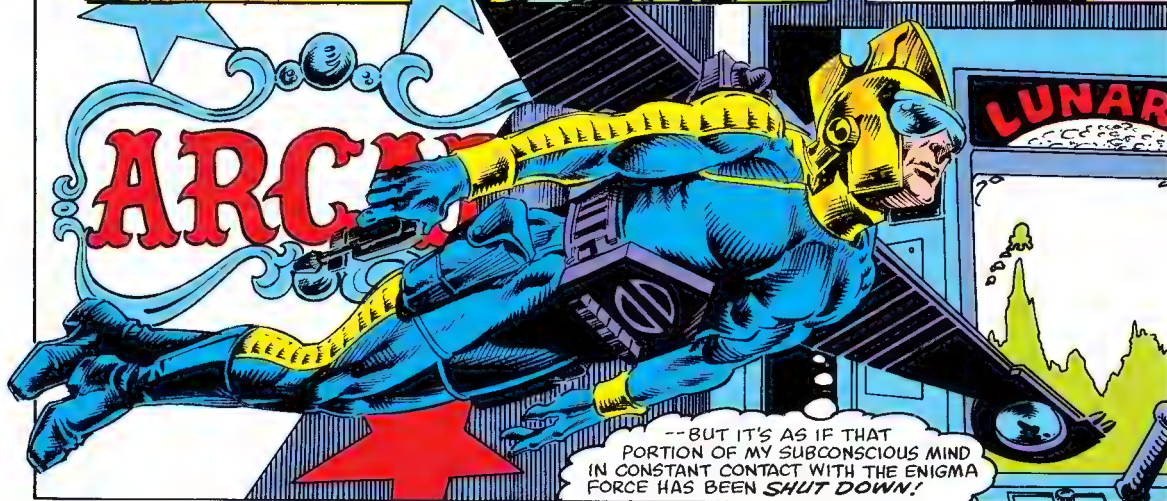
I WILL MAN THE THORIUM GUNS, BIOTRON.

YOU DO THAT, DAGON-- WHILE I PONDER WHO YOU ARE, AND WHAT YOU WANT, AND WHY YOU CHOSE TO REMAIN BEHIND. I DO NOT TRUST YOU, MY PSEUDO-ACROYEAR--

-- BUT I WOULD RATHER HAVE YOU NEAR... WHERE I CAN WATCH YOU... THAN OUT OF SIGHT.

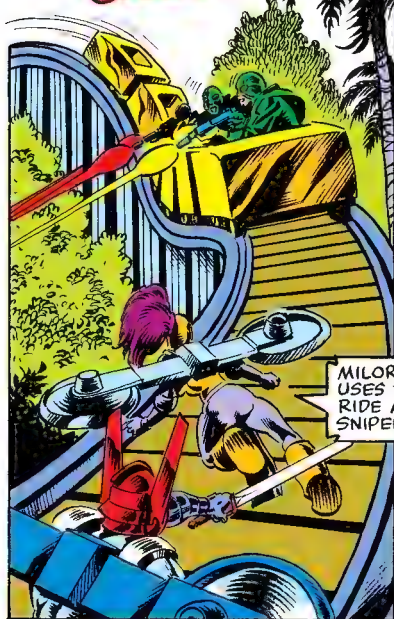
WITH THAT THOUGHT, THE FAITHFUL BIOTRON SEALS HIS OWN FATE.

MEANWHILE, THE ARMADAS OF EVIL MEET THE FORCES OF FREEDOM ON THE FANTASYWORLD BATTLEFIELD...



AS COMMANDER RANN SOARS IN SEARCH OF HIS STOLEN ENERGY EMBODIMENT, THE ACROYEARS ENTER THE FRAY.

SHREE SHREE



MILORD! HYDRA USES THIS ROLLING RIDE AS A MOVABLE SNIPER'S NEST!



THEY SHALL NOT CONTINUE TO DO SO ONCE WE HAVE KNOCKED THEM FROM THEIR PATH, CILICIA.



NOW STRIKE, BELOVED-- FOR FREEDOM!

ELSEWHERE...

NOW I THINK I KNOW HOW CUSTER MUSTA FELT AT THE LITTLE BIG HORN, DUM DUM!

AH, YER BEIN' A FATALIST, NICK! WE'VE BEEN IN TIGHTER SPOTS!



YEAH? NAME ONE!

WELL, THERE WAS...

I CERTAINLY HOPE YOU >TICK< HUMANS HAVE SENT OUT A CALL FOR >TICK< REINFORCEMENTS!



I GOT NEWS FOR YA, GRASSHOPPER-- SOMEHOW YER BUDDY KARZA'S PUT A PSYCHIC-SEAL AROUND FANTASYWORLD! NO ONE GETS IN-- AN' NO ONE GETS OUT! WE'RE ON OUR OWN!

UNAWARE THAT HE IS UNDER OBSERVATION, COMMANDER RANN FORGES AHEAD INTO THE DIMLY-LIT PINBALL ARCADE.

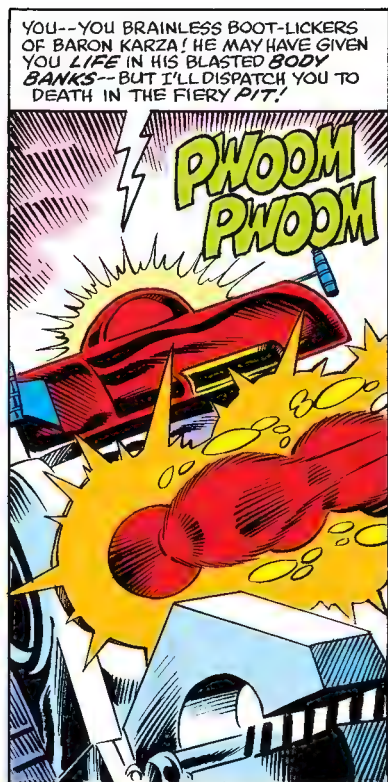


--BIOTRON RECEIVES THE OPENING IMAGES OF THE COMMANDER'S TELEPATHIC RELAY VIA THE MIND-LINK SHARED BY MAN AND MACHINE.





HE-- HE'S BEEN **THERMOBLASTED!**
DAGON, YOU WERE BESIDE HIM! WHAT--?
OH! KARZA'S **DOG SOLDIERS!**
THEY'VE BREACHED THE HULL!



**PWOOM
PWOOM**

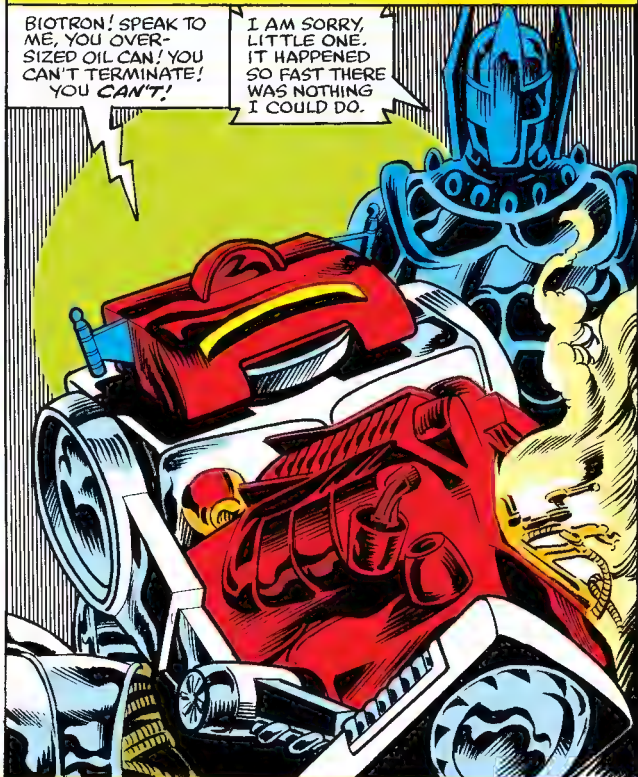


GLEEARGHH!

REPULSING THE DOG SOLDIERS, MICROTRON TURNS TO THE STRICKEN ROBOD...

BIOTRON! SPEAK TO ME, YOU OVER-SIZED OIL CAN! YOU CAN'T TERMINATE! YOU **CAN'T!**

I AM SORRY, LITTLE ONE. IT HAPPENED SO FAST THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO.



BENDING OVER BIOTRON'S BODY, MICROTRON REMEMBERS THAT CILICIA CALLED DAGON A **COWARD...** AND HE WONDERS IF THE ARMORED AROYEAR MIGHT NOT BE SOMETHING EVEN **WORSE.**

THE FEISTY LITTLE ROBOID IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TO GRIEVE AT BIOTRON'S DEMISE.

THE MIND-LINK-- IT'S GONE DEAD!

AND THE SAME SOUL-NUMBING CHILL THAT SWEEP ACROSS ME WHEN THE ENIGMA FORCE WAS WRENCHED FROM MY MIND NOW FILLS ME WITH DREAD!

IT--IT'S BIOTRON! HE'S... GONE!

ARRGH!

SHREK

SKRASH

OLD WORLD

25¢

TH--THAT WAS A BLAST OF PURE ENERGY--THE KIND I WIELDED AS THE TIME TRAVELER WHEN I BECAME ONE WITH THAT PART OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS INFUSED WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE!

I--I SHOULD BE...

DEAD, COMMANDER? SO YOU WILL BE, ONCE I HAVE SATISFIED MYSELF THAT YOU RETAIN NO TRACE OF THE POWER TO WHICH YOU GAVE BIRTH DURING YOUR 1,000 YEAR VOYAGE THROUGH THE MICROVERSE!

BARON KARZA!

YOU SOULLESS, SLIME-SUCKING
SLAUGHTERER! YOU KILLED MY
PARENTS, SLEW MARIONETTE,
THE WOMAN I LOVED, AND
TERMINATED BIOTRON,
MY BEST FRIEND!

I DESTROYED
YOU ONCE
BEFORE! THIS
TIME I'LL FINISH
YOU FOR ALL
ETERNITY!

OH, COME NOW,
COMMANDER!
IT IS I WHO NOW
COMMAND THE
ENIGMA FORCE--
NOT YOU!

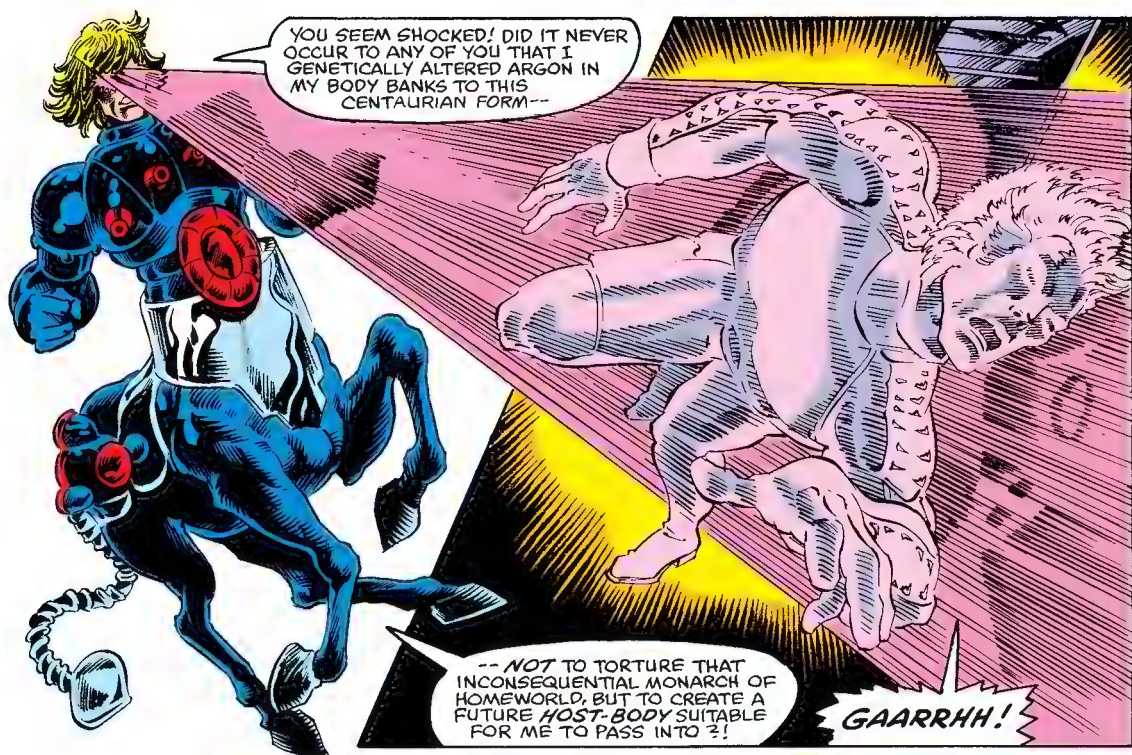
BESIDES, YOU
WOULDN'T DREAM OF
KILLING YOUR BELOVED
PRINCESS MARI'S VERY
OWN BROTHER!

WHAT
ARE YOU
TALKING--?!
GREAT
GALAXIES!

AS RANN
RIPS THE
MASK FROM
BARON
KARZA, IN
A CRACKLE
OF ENERGY
KARZA
TRANSFORMS
HIMSELF
INTO HIS
CENTAUR
ASPECT...

**KING
ARGON!**

ARGON'S BODY, MY
DEAR COMMANDER--
A REGAL HOUSING
FOR THE SUPREME
INTELLECT OF **BARON
KARZA**, DON'T YOU
AGREE?



YOU SEEM SHOCKED! DID IT NEVER OCCUR TO ANY OF YOU THAT I GENETICALLY ALTERED ARGON IN MY BODY BANKS TO THIS CENTAURIAN FORM--

-- NOT TO TORTURE THAT INCONSEQUENTIAL MONARCH OF HOMEWORLD, BUT TO CREATE A FUTURE *HOST-BODY* SUITABLE FOR ME TO PASS INTO ?!

GAARRHH!



NOW NEARLY ALL THE PARTICIPANTS IN MY PRIOR DEFEAT HAVE BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR!

PRINCESS MARI HAS BEEN REDUCED TO ATOMS! KING ARGON I POSSESS BODY AND SOUL!

YOU, COMMANDER-- AND THE TIME TRAVELERS WHO SPRUNG WHOLE FROM YOUR MIND--*FEED* MY POWER!



ONLY ACROYEAR AND THE ACCURSED *WORLDMIND* REMAIN-- AND THEY SHALL FALL IN *FINAL BATTLE*!

COMMANDER RANN SLUNG ACROSS HIS BACK, THE EBON-ARMORED LORD OF EVIL DEMATERIALIZES--



--TO REAPPEAR IN HYDRA HEADQUARTERS UNDER FANTASYLAND.

THE MASTER HAS RETURNED!

WITH THE ONE HE SOUGHT! HIS POWER IS NOW COMPLETE!

NO!



BEHOLD, THE ONLY FORCE IN TWO UNIVERSES CAPABLE OF STOPPING ME-- **BOUND TO MY WILL!**

WHERE THEY DEIFIED ME IN TIMES PAST, NOW THEY SHALL **SERVE** AS THE **SOURCE** OF MY LIMITLESS POWER!

KARZA HAS MIND-SHOCKED COMMANDER RANN INTO A COMA. WITHOUT RANN TO CONTEST HIS USE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, HE HAS MADE HIMSELF ALL-POWERFUL.



ONE WITH THAT MUCH POWER HAS NO NEED OF SERVANTS--AND I, WHO WAS TO HAVE SAT AT HIS RIGHT HAND, AM THUS CAST ASIDE.

THERE IS STILL **ONE** CAPABLE OF DEFEATING KARZA, HOWEVER-- **THE WORLDMIND!**

MEANWHILE, NICK FURY AND HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D. FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS, WAGING A DESPERATE BATTLE THAT MAY WELL BE...

EARTH'S LAST STAND!



UNSEEN BY ANY, PRINCE SHAITAN REACHES FOR THE PORTAL-ACTIVATOR OF BARON KARZA'S INTERDIMENSIONAL TRANSPORTER!

50¢

28
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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

BE
THERE!

RANN--DOOMED!
KARZA--DEFEATED!
THE PLANET
SPARTAK--DESTROYED!

THIS
ISSUE:



Space Glider. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Microtron. Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

BARON KARZA'S BACK-- AND HYDRA'S GOT HIM!



HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED, EARTH'S DEFENDERS--THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS AND NICK FURY'S AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.--FIND THEIR BACKS AGAINST THE WALL IN WHAT MAY WELL BE A...

...LAST STAND IN

FANTASY- WORLD!



FLORIDA'S FANTASYWORLD AMUSEMENT PARK ERUPTS IN FLAME AND FURY AS THE EVIL ARMIES OF THE MICROVERSE AND THE HORDES OF HYDRA-- LED BY THE DIABOLICAL MICRO-VERSION VILLAIN, BARON KARZA --POUR FORTH FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH LIKE MAGGOTS FROM A MAUSOLEUM!

THE EVIL OF TWO UNIVERSES IS UNLEASHED AGAINST US, MILADY CILICIA.

THEN WE WILL FACE IT LIKE WARRIORS BORN, MILORD ACROYEAR.

NICK, HYDRA'S GOT US PINNED! WE GOTTA HAVE REINFORCEMENTS!

I'M TRYIN' TA RAISE THE HELICARRIER ON MY WRIST-VIDEO, DUM DUM! I'M GETTING VISUALS BUT NO AUDIO! THE SIGNAL'S BEIN' JAMMED BY KARZA'S PSYCHO-SEAL!

AGGHH!

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK * DAN BULANADI *
WRITER - STORYTELLERS - ARTIST INKER

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LETTERS
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COLORS

* LOUISE JONES * JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MICROTRON

HIGH OVERHEAD, THE HOVERING
HELICARRIER AWAITS ORDERS
FROM THE FAMED DIRECTOR
OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!



WE'VE GOT
VISUAL
CONTACT WITH
THE COLONEL,
GABE--

* SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE
LAW-ENFORCEMENT
DIVISION -- LOUISE.

-- BUT AUDIO'S COMING THROUGH GARBLED,
AS IF SOMEONE WERE SCRAMBLING OUR
TRANSMISSION FREQUENCIES!

>SQUEE SKREEK
SQUEE-EET<

YEAH-- A LOT OF SOMEONES
WITH THE SUPER-SCIENTIFIC
KNOW-HOW OF HYDRA!



NICK TOLD ME TO WAIT
IN RESERVE UNTIL HE
NEEDED ME! I GOT A
HUNCH HE NEEDS ME
NOW!

SUDDENLY, WITHOUT WARNING FROM
ANY OF ITS SOPHISTICATED SENSOR
DEVICES, THE HULL OF THE HELI-
CARRIER IS BREACHED BY...

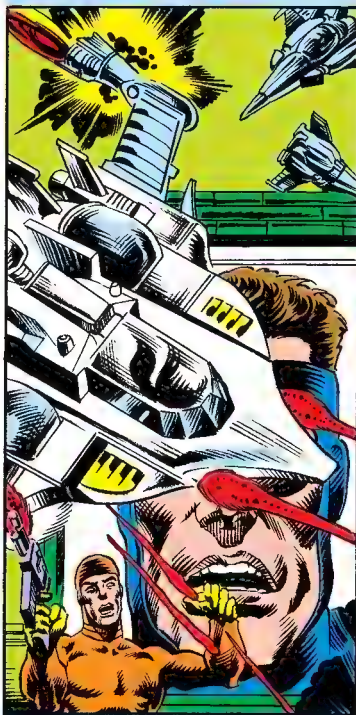
TINY
SPACE-
SHIPS!

VREET!



RED ALERT!
WE'RE UNDER
ATTACK!

WATCHING THE PITCHED BATTLE
ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HELICARRIER
BETWEEN HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
AND THE SMALL BUT IMMENSELY
POWERFUL BATTLE-CRUISERS OF
THE MICROVERSE...

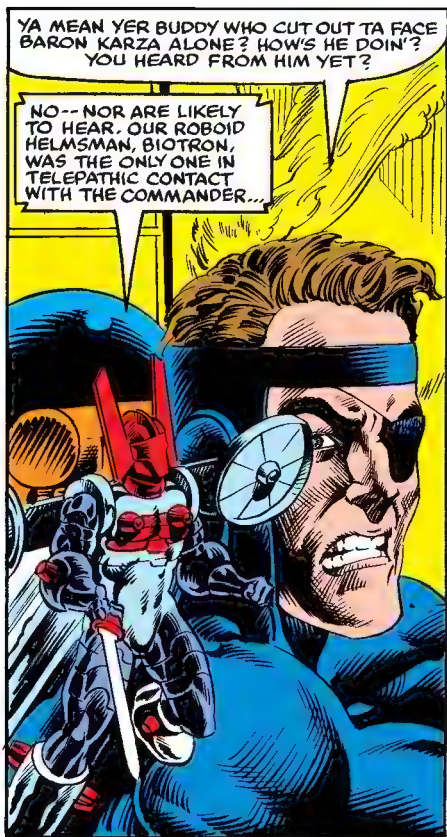


...NICK FURY REALIZES WITH
HORROR THAT HE IS AS HELPLESS
TO AID HIS MEN AS THEY ARE TO
RUSH TO HIS RESCUE!

THAT SINKS IT!
WE CAN'T EXPECT
ANY HELP FROM
THE HELICARRIER!
WE'RE ON OUR
OWN!



WE ARE NOT YET
DEFEATED, COLONEL. THERE IS
STILL... **COMMANDER RANN.**



YA MEAN YER BUDDY WHO CUT OUT TA FACE BARON KARZA ALONE? HOW'S HE DOIN'? YOU HEARD FROM HIM YET?

NO-- NOR ARE LIKELY TO HEAR. OUR ROBROID HELMSMAN, BIOTRON, WAS THE ONLY ONE IN TELEPATHIC CONTACT WITH THE COMMANDER...



...AND BIOTRON IS *DEAD*-- TERMINATED BY KARZA'S DOG SOLDIERS DURING THEIR ASSAULT ON OUR MICROSHIP, THE ENDEAVOR.

FIRST MY MISTRESS MARIONETTE, AND NOW BIOTRON... MY FRIEND!*

*MICROTRON BELIEVES, INCORRECTLY, MARIONETTE PERISHED IN #26-- LOUISE.

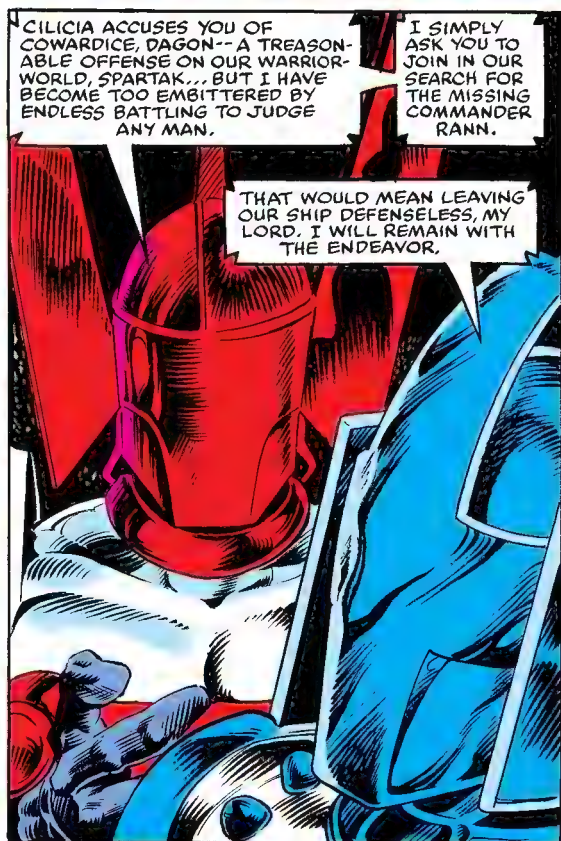


YOU-- DAGON-- *CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD OF SPARTAK WHOM BUG DISCOVERED ENCASED IN LIFE-PROTECTIVE AMBER WITHIN THE HELICARRIER. #26 AGAIN. --L.

YES, MY LIEGE?

MICROTRON SAYS YOU WERE BESIDE BIOTRON WHEN HE DIED, YET YOU NEVER DREW YOUR WEAPON IN HIS DEFENSE.

THE ATTACK CAME SO SUDDENLY, MY LIEGE, THERE WAS NO TIME.



CILICIA ACCUSES YOU OF COWARDICE, DAGON-- A TREASONABLE OFFENSE ON OUR WARRIOR-WORLD, SPARTAK... BUT I HAVE BECOME TOO EMBITTERED BY ENDLESS BATTLING TO JUDGE ANY MAN.

I SIMPLY ASK YOU TO JOIN IN OUR SEARCH FOR THE MISSING COMMANDER RANN.

THAT WOULD MEAN LEAVING OUR SHIP DEFENSELESS, MY LORD. I WILL REMAIN WITH THE ENDEAVOR.

BUT THE DISDAIN THAT THE REMAINING MICRO-NAUTS FEEL FOR DAGON IS CLEARLY APPARENT... BEHIND HIS MASK, AGRO-YEAR'S FURY IS HIDDEN...

DON'T 3TIKE ASK HIM TA HELP US, BIG BUDDY--YOU'RE HIS KING! ORDER HIM! SHEESH! I'M 3TIKE SORRY NOW I EVER 3TIKE FREED THE SCURVY SLINKER!

SUCH COWARDICE STEMS FROM OUR PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER, WEAKER RACES-- I AM SURE OF IT.



WELL, NOW THAT YA'VE TAKEN TIME OUT FOR STATION IDENTIFICATION, I FEEL I GOTTA REMIND YA THERE'S A WAR ON!

HYDRA'S GOT A SAYIN': "CUT OFF A LIMB, AN' TWO MORE TAKE ITS PLACE!" BUT THIS KARZA CREEP AIN'T JUST A LIMB-- HE'S THE HEAD-HONCHO!



IF COMMANDER RANN HAS FAILED-- IT IS UP TO US TO CONFRONT KARZA.

IT IS A SOMBER NICK FURY WHO WATCHES THE MINUTE MICRONAUTS HURL THEMSELVES ONCE AGAIN INTO BATTLE...

I WISH YA LUCK, MUNCHKINS! YA'VE GOT GUTS, NO DOUBTIN' THAT-- BUT KARZA'S AN ARMORED ASSASSIN OF THE MOST COLD-BLOODED KIND!

AWRIGHT, YA YAHOOOS! HERE HYDRA COMES AGAIN!

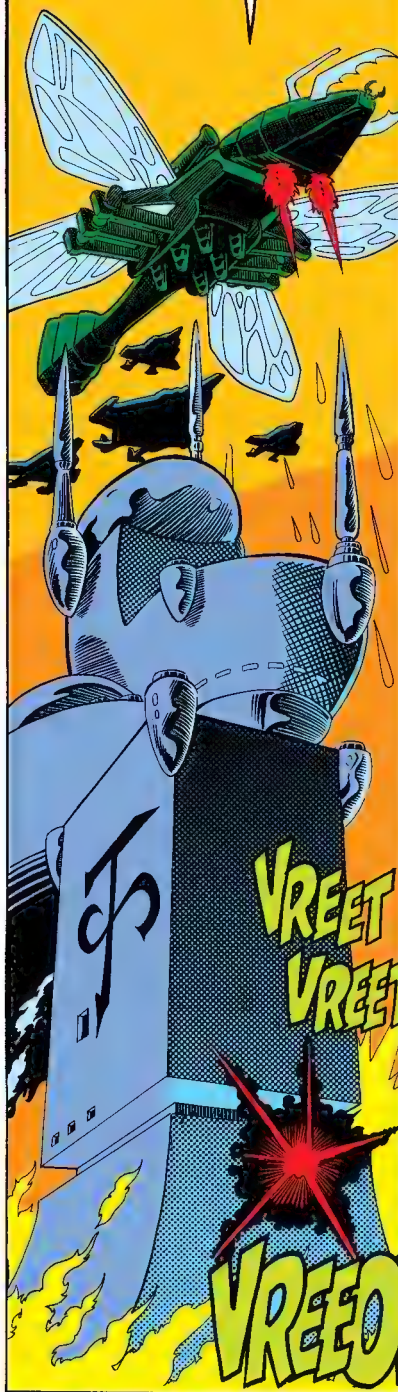
CIRCLE THE WAGONS, AN' LET'S HEAR THAT OLD HOWLER CHEER...

WAHOO!

THE EX-HOWLING COMMANDO PREPARES TO FIGHT YET ANOTHER WAR!

MEANWHILE, BEYOND THE SPACE-TIME BARRIER CALLED THE SPACEWALL, IN THE SUBMICROSCOPIC SOLAR SYSTEM KNOWN AS THE MICROVERSE, THE MOLECULAR PLANET, HOMEWORLD, IS CAUGHT UP IN A CONFLAGRATION NO LESS FIERCE!

DROP
THORIUM
CHARGES--
NOW!



VREET
VREET

VREEDOW

THE DIVERSE SHIPS-OF-THE-LINE OF BARON KARZA'S BLOODY BATTLE-FLEET--THEIR CREWS COMPRISED OF RENEGADES, PIRATES, AND SCUM FROM EVERY RACE OF THE MICROVERSE-- ATTACK EVERYWHERE AT ONCE, BUT CONCENTRATE THEIR FIERCEST FIRE...

...ON THE REMNANTS OF HOMEWORLD'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY, LED BY THE MICRONAUT MARIONETTE, IRONICALLY THEY HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN THE NEAR-IMPREGNABLE FORMER FORTRESS OF THEIR FOE... THE BODY BANKS OF BARON KARZA!

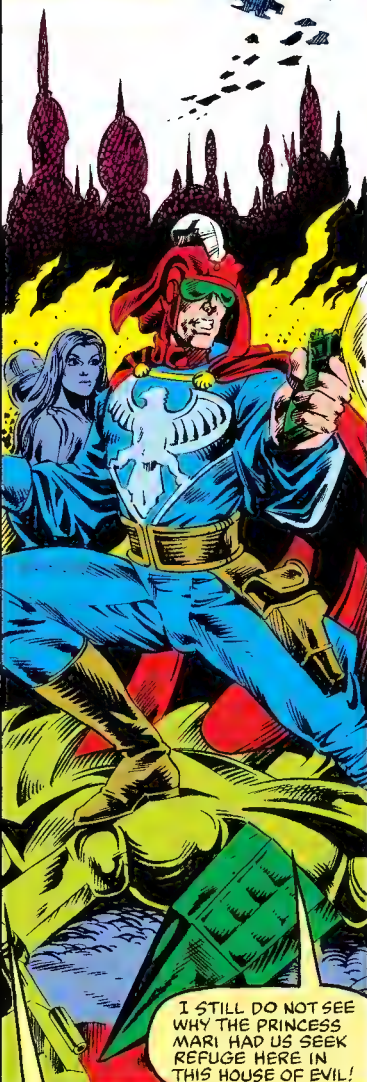
FIGHT, LADS
AND LADIES! IF
FIRST ZONE
FALLS-- THEN SO
FALLS HOMEWORLD...
AND ONCE AGAIN WE
WILL BE CRUSHED
BENEATH KARZA'S
IRON HEEL!



SKIK-
KI-KI-
KREE!!

AMONG THE DEFENDERS FIGHTS PHAROID, LORD OF THE SUBTERRANEAN DESERT CITADEL, AEGYPTA, ON HOMEWORLD'S SANDZONE...

...AND THE BEAUTÉOUS LADY SLUG-- BETROTHED OF HOMEWORLD'S KING ARGON, WHOSE BODY NOW HOUSES THE MALEVOLENT MIND OF BARON KARZA!



BECAUSE IT IS **TO** HERE THAT KARZA'S ARMIES STREAM IN NUMBERS AS ENDLESS AS THE STARS! WE MUST KEEP THEM AWAY UNTIL WE DISCOVER **WHY!**

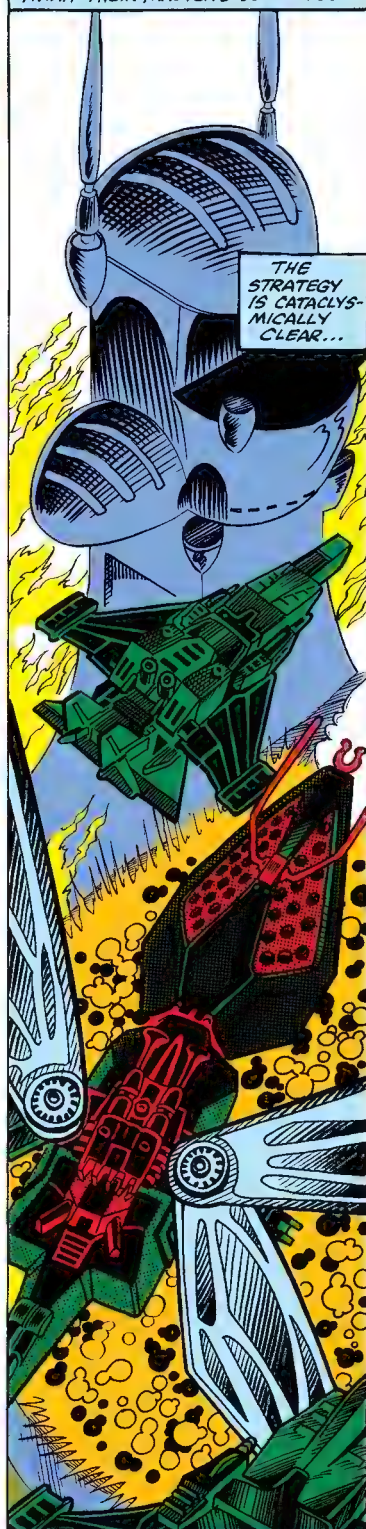
DRIVEN BACK AGAINST THE EDGE OF THE WORLDCORE PIT-- A BOTTOMLESS HOLE REACHING DEEP INTO THE BOWELS OF THE PLANET ITSELF-- THE DEFENDERS HEAR AN EERIE KEENING WAIL... AND IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTAND!

ONE OF KARZA'S FACELESS PRIESTS, SCREAMING LIKE A SONARIAN SPACE SIREN! DALLAN'S GHOST, THE PIT GLOWS TO HIS CRY-- OPENING LIKE SOME FIENDISH PORTAL...

...WHOSE ONLY PURPOSE CAN BE TO TRANSPORT KARZA'S FORCES PAST THE SPACE-WALL THAT THEY MAY CARRY THE BATTLE TO-- EARTH!



ALL BUT IGNORING THEIR OPPOSITION, KARZA'S TRANSPORT CARRIERS CIRCLE THE GLOWING WORLDCORE PIT TO AWAIT THEIR MASTER'S SUMMONS!



BARON KARZA INTENDS TO CONQUER FIRST THE EARTH, AND THEN USE EARTH'S WEAPONRY AGAINST THE MICROVERSE!

WITHIN HIS HYDRA HEADQUARTERS ON OUR OWN EMBATTLED EARTH, BARON KARZA EXULTS. EVEN NOW, HIS ENERGY-FEEDERS SIPHON THE AWESOME POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE FROM THE MAN WHO, USING IT TO CREATE THE TIME TRAVELERS, IS THE ONLY BEING EVER TO HAVE THWARTED HIM!

NEVER AGAIN, COMMANDER RAWN! THE ENIGMA FORCE PASSES-- AS PUREST POWER-- TO ME!

WITH CONTROL OF THIS POWER, WHICH MAINTAINS THE DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN MULTIVERSES AND KEEPS THEM FROM COLLIDING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN A VIOLENT COSMIC UPHEAVAL...



TURNING THE ENIGMA FORCE TO EVIL, I ALREADY DOMINATE THE HATE-RIDDEN HORDES OF HYDRA! THEY SERVE ME AS THOUGH IT WERE THEIR OWN DECISION-- THEIR ONLY DESIRE IN LIFE!

AND WHY NOT? I AM A MASTER AT MANIPULATING THE MINDS OF MEN!



DID I NOT PREPARE FOR MY INITIAL DEFEAT AT YOUR HANDS, COMMANDER, BY IMPLANTING A POST-OPERATIVE COMMAND IN THE BRAIN OF THE GENETICALLY-ALTERED KING ARGON--



--ORDERING HIM TO OFFER HIMSELF UP AS A HOST-BODY ON THE DAY OF MY INEVITABLE RESURRECTION?

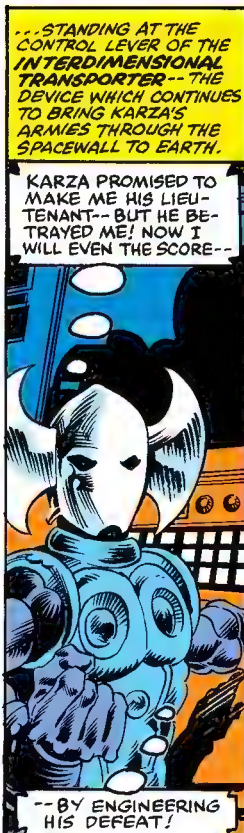


BAH, I GROW WEARY OF EXTOLLING MY EXPLOITS TO EMPTY EARS! HYDRA'S AGENTS ARE NO MORE THAN BRAIN-SLAVES! MY MICROVERSE ARMIES SERVE ME OUT OF FEAR OR GREED!

ONLY YOU UNDERSTOOD ME, COMMANDER-- AND THE VERY MIND-SHOCK THAT ALLOWED ME TO TAP YOUR HIDDEN POWER HAS ALSO, ALAS, RENDERED YOU COMATOSE!

A PITY! I ALWAYS WAS FOND OF YOU, MY FORMER PUPIL!

SO ENGROSSED IS BARON KARZA IN EULOGIZING HIS GENIUS, THAT HE FAILS TO NOTICE HIS ALLY, THE ALBINO ACROYEAR PRINCE SHAITAN...



...STANDING AT THE CONTROL LEVER OF THE INTERDIMENSIONAL TRANSPORTER-- THE DEVICE WHICH CONTINUES TO BRING KARZA'S ARMIES THROUGH THE SPACEWALL TO EARTH.

KARZA PROMISED TO MAKE ME HIS LIEUTENANT-- BUT HE BETRAYED ME! NOW I WILL EVEN THE SCORE--

--BY ENGINEERING HIS DEFEAT!



UNAWARE THAT A TRAITOR IN KARZA'S OWN RANKS MAY TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE, NICK FURY AND HIS AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D. FIGHT ON!

CUT OFF FROM THE HELICARRIER-- HALF MY COMMAND RIPPED TA RIBBONS! I GOTTA TRY SOMETHIN'!

MAYBE THE PSYCHO-SEAL KARZA THREW AROUND FANTASYWORLD HAS EASED UP A BIT, SO'S I CAN GET A MESSAGE TO...



...THE AVENGERS H.Q....

HMM, SOMETHING'S COMING THROUGH ON THE S.H.I.E.L.D. PRIORITY CIRCUIT.

> SQUEE-REET SKKKK SQUEE-REET SKKKK<

STATIC, ODD, TONY STARK HIMSELF DESIGNED THIS SYSTEM TO BE INFALLIBLE.

FORGIVE ME FOR CONTRADICTING YOU, IRON MAN, BUT MACHINES-- LIKE MEN-- ARE NEVER INCAPABLE OF ERROR.

YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE, VISION. I'LL INFORM STARK OF THIS PROBLEM WE'RE HAVING... THE NEXT TIME I SEE HIM.



THUS, THINKING THE PROBLEM LIES IN THEIR EQUIPMENT, THE MIGHTY AVENGERS MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO ANSWER FURY'S DESPERATE CALL!

NUTHIN'! NOT A PEEP! DON'T KNOW IF I EVEN GOT THROUGH! ARGH!

NICK!

OH, MY! OUR EARTH-LING ALLY HAS BEEN STRICKEN!

MEANWHILE, STRIKING WITH A SAVAGERY AND SWIFTNESS THAT BELIES THEIR TINY SIZE--BUG, ACROYEAR, AND CILICIA SLICE THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LINES!



HYDRA AGENTS AND MICROVERSION INVADERS FALL...



...BUT THE THREE INTREPID ADVENTURERS ARE ALL TOO AWARE THAT THEIR ONLY HOPE OF CUTTING OFF THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS FLOW OF THEIR ENEMIES IS TO STOP THEM AT THEIR SOURCE.

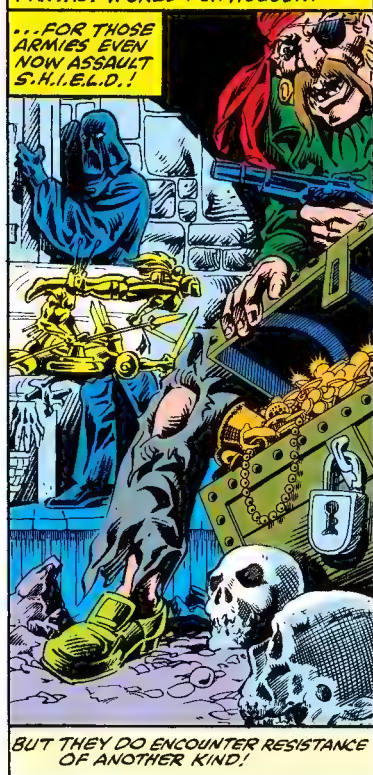


ACROYEAR-- LOOK! THE OPEN 3-TIK MAW OF THAT GRINNIN' MUG--!

AYE, LITTLE ONE! 'TIS THE PORTAL THROUGH WHICH THE FOE STREAMS FROM THE MICROVERSE!

THE MICRONAUTS MEET NO INVADING ARMIES AT THE MOUTH OF THE FANTASY WORLD FUN HOUSE...

...FOR THOSE ARMIES EVEN NOW ASSAULT S.H.I.E.L.D.!



BUT THEY DO ENCOUNTER RESISTANCE OF ANOTHER KIND!

AVAST THERE ME HEARTIES-- THIS BERTH'S OFF-LIMITS EXCEPT TA THE ARMIES OF BARON KARZA!



THE HUMANOID STATUES--! THEY MOVE! THEY SPEAK!

THAT'S 'CAUSE THEY'RE MOREN 3-TIK STATUES, CILICIA!



THEY'VE BEEN TURNED INTA 3-TIK EARLY-WARNIN' SENSOR DROIDS-- ARMED WITH SUPER-WEAPONS TA REPEL 3-TIK US!

COMMANDER RANN IS HELD CAPTIVE ONLY YARDS AWAY-- IN BARON KARZA'S COMMAND HEADQUARTERS IN THE BOWELS OF THE FUN HOUSE...

...BUT THOSE YARDS MIGHT AS WELL BE MILES!

THE BATTLE ABOVE IS ALMOST WON, MY DEAR COMMANDER!

WITH S.H.I.E.L.D. DESTROYED, MY ARMIES WILL STRIKE WITH LIGHTNING SPEED ALL OVER THIS PLANET...

...AND BARON KARZA WILL RULE THE EARTH!

THERE APPEARS TO BE NO WAY TO FORESTALL THE TYRANT'S PREDICTION...

...FOR EARTH'S DEFENDERS, THOUGH ACQUITTING THEMSELVES WITH VALOR--

--ARE, ALAS, ALL TOO FEW.

EVEN IN HIS COMA, COMMANDER RANN KNOWS THIS--

--AND HIS HEART CRIES OUT, FOR IT IS THE ENIGMA FORCE-- RESIDING WITHIN HIS MIND-- WHICH IS BEING USED TO REND A UNIVERSE!

SUDDENLY...

KRASHTOOM!

THE MICRONAUTS! THEY'RE HERE!

SHUCKS! WE DIDN'T SKRAG YER ROBROID SENTRIES BEFORE THEY COULD-7IK- ANNOUNCE THE NEWS--

--JUST SO'S YOU COULD OPEN YER BIG 7IK- YAP AN' SPILL THE BEANS!

HIS HYDRA ALLIES THROWN ON THE DEFENSIVE BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE MICRONAUTS' UNEXPECTED ASSAULT, BARON KARZA FINDS HIMSELF FACING AN ENRAGED ACRO-YEAR!

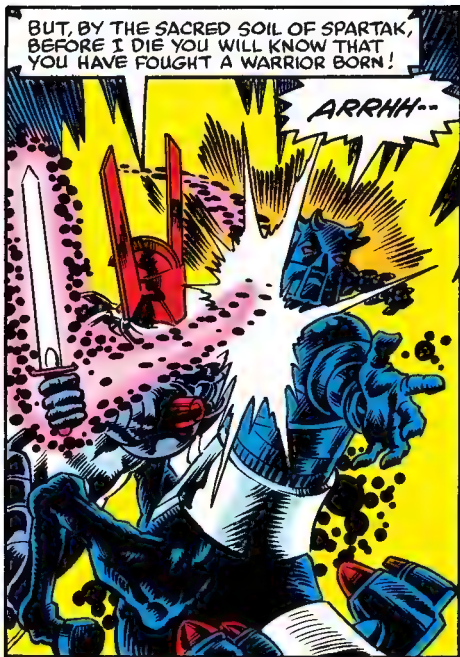
WHILST MY FELLOW MICRONAUTS ENDEAVOR TO FREE COMMANDER RANN, LET US SEE HOW EVIL INCARNATE RESISTS THE ATTACK OF AN ARMORED ACROYEAR WARRIOR!

YOU ARE EITHER MAD--OR FOOLISH--SON OF SPARTAK!

BARON KARZA IS NO MERE MAN TO BE FOUGHT WITH WORDS OR WEAPONS! WITH THE MIND OF COMMANDER RANN ADDING TO MY OWN INCREDIBLE ENERGIES THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE --

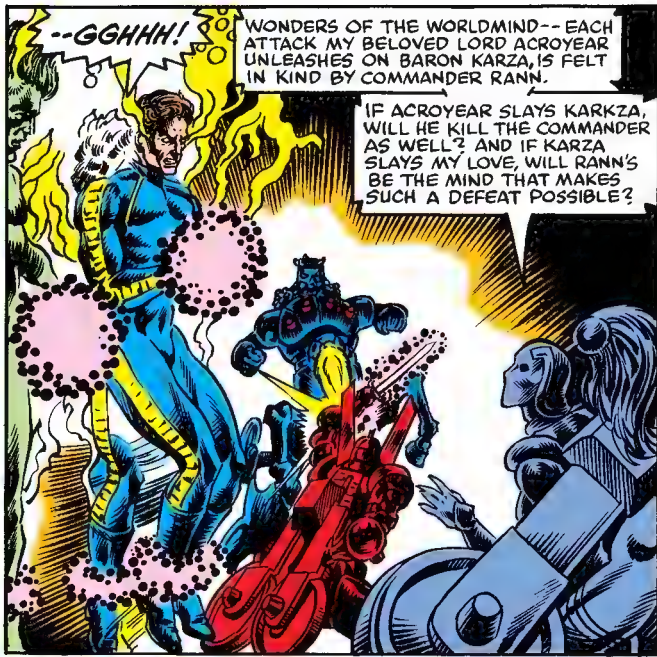
--I AM WELL NIGH INVINCIBLE!

IF YOUR WORDS BE TRUE, THEN MY DEATH IS A CERTAINTY!



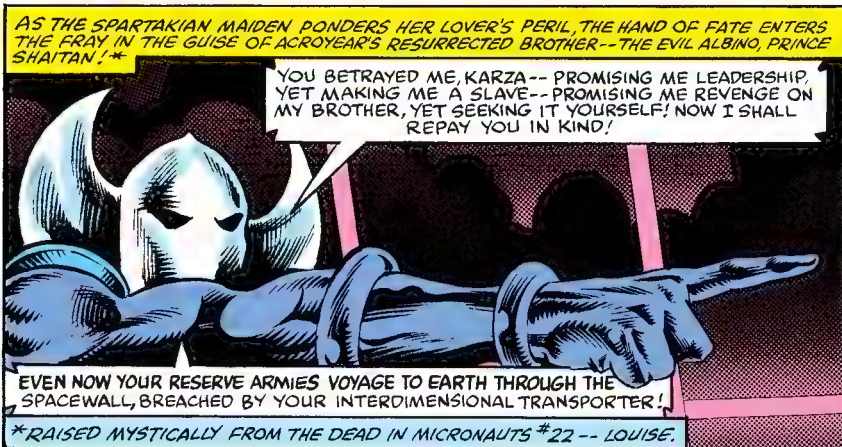
BUT, BY THE SACRED SOIL OF SPARTAK,
BEFORE I DIE YOU WILL KNOW THAT
YOU HAVE FOUGHT A WARRIOR BORN!

ARRHH--



--GGHHH!
WONDERS OF THE WORLD MIND-- EACH
ATTACK MY BELOVED LORD ACROYEAR
UNLEASHES ON BARON KARZA, IS FELT
IN KIND BY COMMANDER RANN.

IF ACROYEAR SLAYS KARKZA,
WILL HE KILL THE COMMANDER
AS WELL? AND IF KARZA
SLAYS MY LOVE, WILL RANN'S
BE THE MIND THAT MAKES
SUCH A DEFEAT POSSIBLE?



AS THE SPARTAKIAN MAIDEN PONDERES HER LOVER'S PERIL, THE HAND OF FATE ENTERS
THE FRAY IN THE GUISE OF ACROYEAR'S RESURRECTED BROTHER-- THE EVIL ALBINO, PRINCE
SHAITAN! *

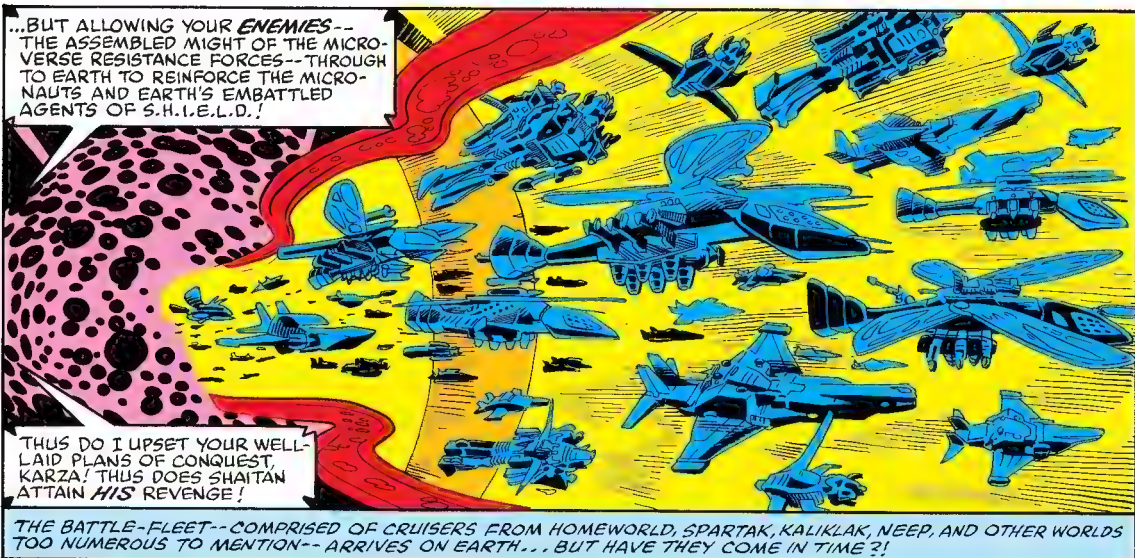
YOU BETRAYED ME, KARZA-- PROMISING ME LEADERSHIP,
YET MAKING ME A SLAVE-- PROMISING ME REVENGE ON
MY BROTHER, YET SEEKING IT YOURSELF! NOW I SHALL
REPAY YOU IN KIND!

EVEN NOW YOUR RESERVE ARMIES VOYAGE TO EARTH THROUGH THE
SPACEWALL, BREACHED BY YOUR INTERDIMENSIONAL TRANSPORTER!

*RAISED MYSTICALLY FROM THE DEAD IN MICRONAUTS #22 -- LOUISE.



WITH THIS LEVER
I SEAL THE
SPACEWALL, TRAPPING
YOUR FLEET
FOREVER IN HYPER-
SPACE...



...BUT ALLOWING YOUR ENEMIES--
THE ASSEMBLED MIGHT OF THE MICRO-
VERSE RESISTANCE FORCES-- THROUGH
TO EARTH TO REINFORCE THE MICRO-
NAUTS AND EARTH'S EMBATTLED
AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!

THUS DO I UPSET YOUR WELL-
LAID PLANS OF CONQUEST,
KARZA! THUS DOES SHAITAN
ATTAIN HIS REVENGE!

THE BATTLE-FLEET-- COMPRISED OF CRUISERS FROM HOMEWORLD, SPARTAK, KALIKLAK, NEEP, AND OTHER WORLDS
TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION-- ARRIVES ON EARTH... BUT HAVE THEY COME IN TIME?!

OUTSIDE, AMIDST THE RUINS OF FANTASY WORLD...

WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF STUN-SHELLS, COL. FURY!

SO WHAT? YA CAN'T FIGHT WITHOUT BULLETS? TOSS SPITBALLS AT HYDRA IF THAT'S ALL YA GOT LEFT!

AT EASE, OLD FRIEND...

WHAT'S WITH THIS "OLD FRIEND" BIT? YER TALKIN' TA DUM DUM DUGAN, REMEMBER? WE BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH FOR ME NOT TO KNOW WE'RE IN TROUBLE WHEN YA DON'T CALL ME "YA OLD WALRUS"!

WE **ARE** IN TROUBLE... YOU OLD WALRUS.

SO THIS IS THE END, HUH?

LOOKS THAT WAY, DUM DUM.

YEAH? WELL I'M GONNA TAKE A FEW "SIEG HEILERS" OR "HAIL HYDRAS"---OR WHATEVER THEY CALL THEMSELVES--WITH ME WHEN I GO!

COL. FURY! THE SHOOTING--IT'S STOPPED!

THERE IS INDEED A LULL AS HYDRA AND BARON KARZA'S HORDES REGROUP FOR A FINAL ASSAULT!

VICTORY IS WITHIN OUR GRASP!

SHOW S.H.I.E.L.D. NO MERCY!

SUDDENLY, IT IS HYDRA AND KARZA'S ARMIES WHO ARE DEALT WITH MERCILESSLY!

SOLDIERS OF THE RESISTANCE--STRIKE!

THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED!

EEYAGH!

VREEOW

VROOM

A SIMILAR SCENE IS BEING ENACTED IN KARZA'S COMMAND CENTER BENEATH AN UNMONITORED VIDEO SCREEN...

**VREET
VREET
VREEOW**

UP AND
AT 'EM!
WAHOO!

HAIL HYDRA! CUT OFF A LIMB
AND TWO MORE SHALL TAKE
ITS PLACE! AGGH!

NOT THIS
TIME!

YOUR FORCES ARE
ROUTED, KARZA --
YOUR DREAM OF
CONQUEST, DEAD!

NOT SO
LONG AS
I YET LIVE,
ACROYEAR!

AT THAT MOMENT, ARRIVING WITH THE
ARMIES OF THE RESISTANCE...

PRINCESS
TIK: MARI!
ALIVE!

YES, BUG-- BUT WHAT OF
COMMANDER RANN?

WHAT OF MY
BELOVED
ARCTURUS?!

HE WRITHES IN PAIN WITH EACH BLOW DE-
LIVERED BY ACROYEAR TO BARON KARZA, MARI!

TH-THEN ACROYEAR MUST BREAK
OFF THE BATTLE LEST ARCTURUS
COME TO HARM!

ARE YOU
MAD,
MARIONETTE?!

IF KARZA LIVES, WE-- AND TWO
UNIVERSES -- MAY DIE!

SO NO MATTER WHAT TIK: THE
COST, ACROYEAR'S GOTTA TIK:
FIGHT ON-- ALONE?!

PERHAPS NOT ALONE
TIK: LITTLE THIEF.

HOLY SHREW!
QUEEN
ESMERA OF
TIK: KALIKLAK!

THOUGH I BE RINGED ABOUT WITH
ENEMIES-- STILL SHALL MY
POWER PREVAIL!

NEVER, VILLAIN!
GNNGG!

**B
R
O
W
N**

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO DEFEAT KARZA--
FIRST, BY PENETRATING THE FORCE-FIELD
KARZA HAS THROWN AROUND COMMANDER
RANN AND SLAYING THE MAN OF HOMEWORLD!

'TWOULD STRIP KARZA
OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE AND HALVE
HIS POWER--

--BUT
'TWOULD NOT
ENSURE HIS
DEATH!

AND DIE HE MUST-- FOR, HAVING BETRAYED HIM, I DARE NOT FACE HIS WRATH! THUS, THE SECOND ALTERNATIVE BECOMES IMPERATIVE! I MUST DO AS MY BROTHER DID ONCE BEFORE ME!

ASSERTING MY ROYAL CLAIM TO HALF ACROYEAR'S THRONE, I MUST CALL FORTH THE **WORLD MIND**... THE SOUL OF OUR LIVING STONEWORLD, SPARTAK!



IN CONCERT WITH THE **ENIGMA FORCE** IT DEFEATED KARZA ONCE BEFORE! * ALONE-- IN THE HANDS OF ONE NOT TOO TAINTED BY CONTACT WITH HUMANITY TO WIELD IT-- IT SHALL TRIUMPH AGAINST THE TYRANT... ALONE!

*SHAME ON YOU IF YOU'VE FORGOTTEN MICRONAUTS #1!-- LIBRARIAN LOUISE.

AS PRINCE SHAITAN-- IN SOME UNFATHOMABLE MANNER-- SENDS A SUMMONS ACROSS THE VOID AND DRAWS THE POWER OF HIS PLANET TO HIM, BARON KARZA BECOMES AWARE OF...

A PRESENCE-- A **POWER** MIGHTY ENOUGH TO RIVAL MY OWN!



IT CAN ONLY BE--!

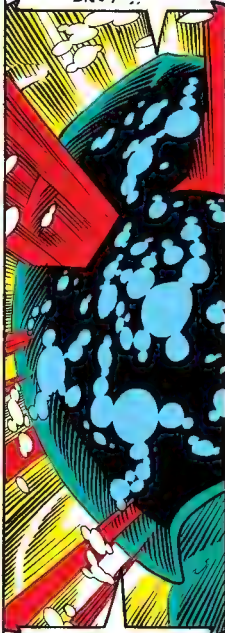
THE **WORLD MIND**, MY FORMER MASTER!



WILL YOU TELL YOUR FOOLISH BROTHER WHAT HE HAS DONE TO HIMSELF-- AND YOUR WORLD-- ACROYEAR, OR SHALL I?

SHAITAN, FOR OUR PEOPLE'S SAKE-- FOR YOUR OWN-- RELINQUISH THE POWER!

GIVE IT UP? NOW THAT I AM, FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE, MIGHTY ENOUGH TO DESTROY THOSE I FEAR AND ENVY?!



NEVER! KARZA SHALL DIE-- AND YOU, MY BROTHER, SHALL BEND YOUR ROYAL KNEE BEFORE--!

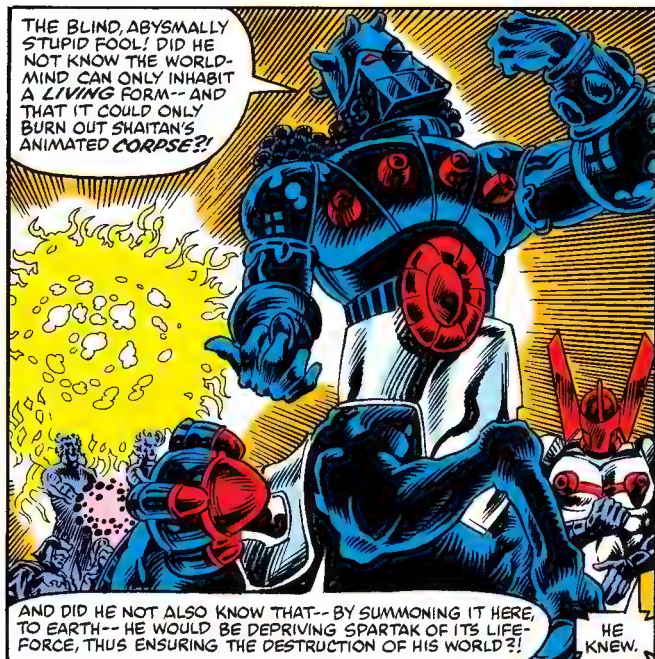
EH? ACROYEAR! WH-- WHAT IS HAPPENING TO--



--ME...?



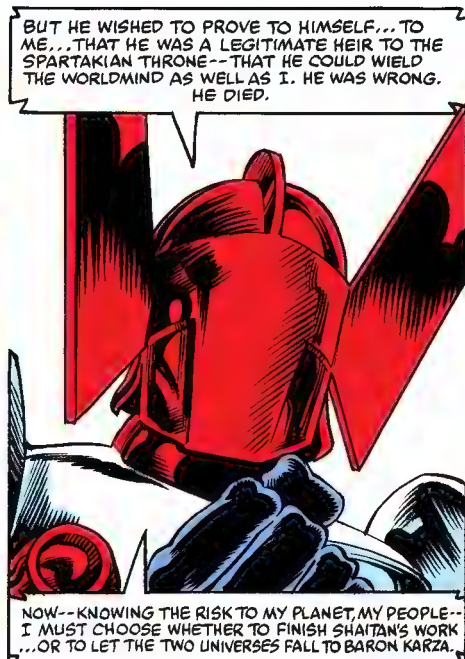
FOR THE SECOND TIME, SHAITAN DIES.



THE BLIND, ABYSMALLY STUPID FOOL! DID HE NOT KNOW THE WORLD-MIND CAN ONLY INHABIT A LIVING FORM-- AND THAT IT COULD ONLY BURN OUT SHAITAN'S ANIMATED CORPSE?!

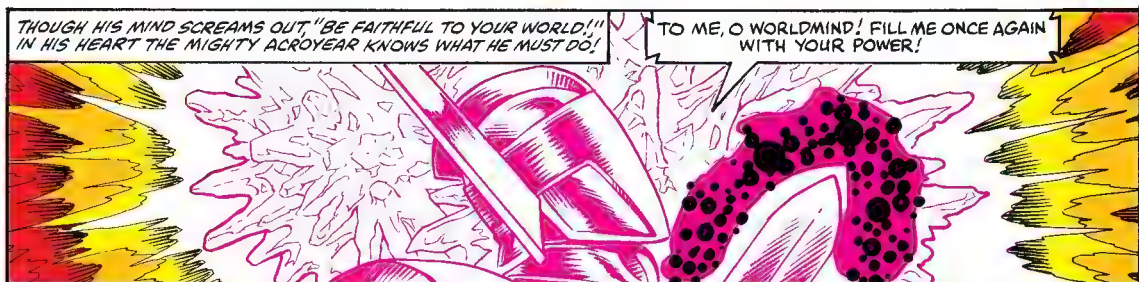
AND DID HE NOT ALSO KNOW THAT-- BY SUMMONING IT HERE, TO EARTH-- HE WOULD BE DEPRIVING SPARTAK OF ITS LIFE-FORCE, THUS ENSURING THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS WORLD?!

HE KNEW.



BUT HE WISHED TO PROVE TO HIMSELF... TO ME... THAT HE WAS A LEGITIMATE HEIR TO THE SPARTAKIAN THRONE-- THAT HE COULD WIELD THE WORLD-MIND AS WELL AS I. HE WAS WRONG. HE DIED.

NOW-- KNOWING THE RISK TO MY PLANET, MY PEOPLE-- I MUST CHOOSE WHETHER TO FINISH SHAITAN'S WORK ...OR TO LET THE TWO UNIVERSES FALL TO BARON KARZA.



THOUGH HIS MIND SCREAMS OUT, "BE FAITHFUL TO YOUR WORLD!" IN HIS HEART THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR KNOWS WHAT HE MUST DO!

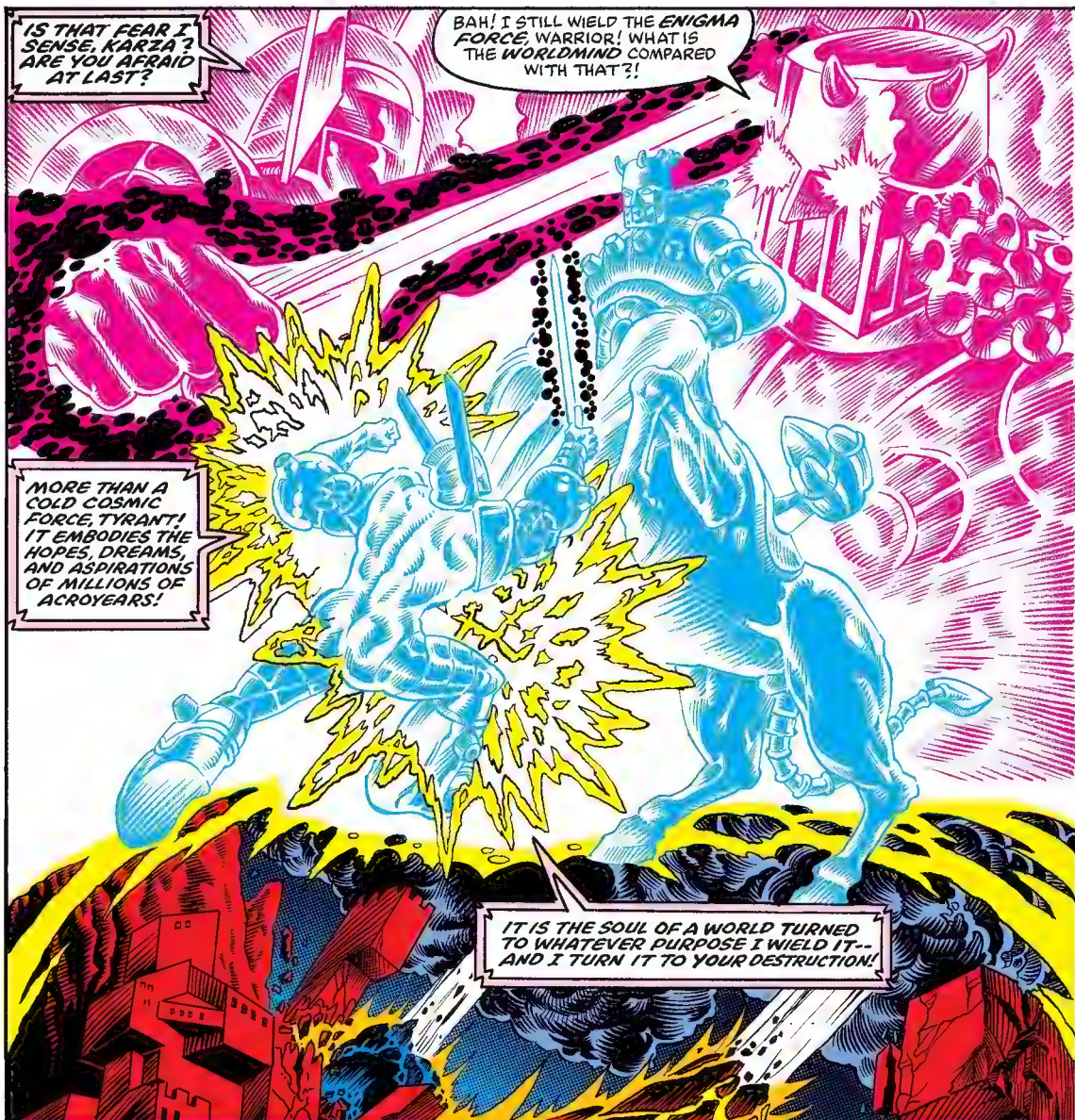
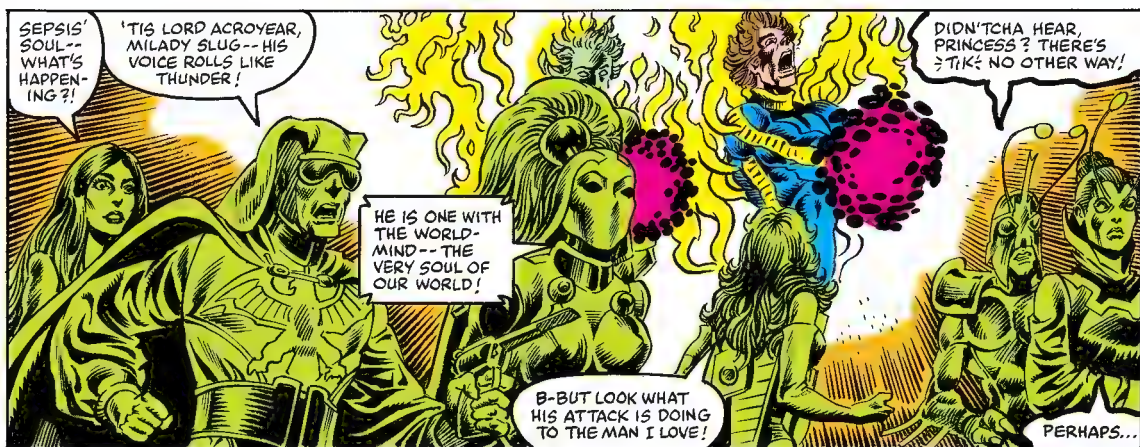
TO ME, O WORLD-MIND! FILL ME ONCE AGAIN WITH YOUR POWER!



THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK ONCE THE DEED BE DONE!

YOU MAD FOOL! USE THE WORLD-MIND AGAINST THE ENIGMA FORCE-- AND SPARTAK WILL DIE! **ARRGH!**

RANT ON WHILE YOU MAY, MAD-MAN! SOON YOUR TONGUE WILL BE STILLED... FOREVER!



ALTHOUGH THE BATTLE RAGES ON EARTH, THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE WORLD MIND FROM SPARTAK CAUSES THAT PLANET TO UNDERGO THE DEATH THROES OF GREAT GEOLOGIC UPHEAVALS!

WORLDWIND OR NO 3TIK3 WORLDWIND, MY BIG BUDDY'S FIGHTIN' THE DEADLIEST 3TIK3 DUDE IN TWO UNIVERSES! I GOTTA HELP...

YOUR ROCKET-LANCE IS NOT *THAT* 3TIK3 MIGHTY, LITTLE THIEF.

QUEEN ESMERA! LOOK 3TIK3 LADYBUG, IF I'D HUNG AROUND THE *NEST* WAITIN' FOR YOU TA ORDER A REVOLT AGAINST KARZA--

-- I NEVER WOULD'VE LIVED TA 3TIK3 HELP THE MICRONAUTS DEFEAT HIM THE FIRST TIME!

YOU ARE 3TIK3 BRAVE, BUG--AND WISE.

BUT WHAT IS 3TIK3 NEEDED NOW-- AS ACROYEAR KNEW WHEN HE SUMMONED THE WORLDWIND-- IS 3TIK3 THE POWER OF A PLANET.

POWER SUCH AS OUR WORLD KALIKLAK INVESTED IN ME, ITS 3TIK3 *QUEEN*--

--WHEN IT BRED INTO ME THE DEADLY *SUICIDE-STING*!

BUT EVEN AS QUEEN ESMERA LEAPS AT THE COMBATANTS, ACROYEAR IS STARTLED TO DISCOVER...

YOUR FACE--! UNMASKED, BARON KARZA IS KING ARGON OF HOMEWORLD!

KARZA'S MIND IN ARGON'S BODY, YOU MEAN! BUT THE SHOCK HAS CAUSED YOU TO LOWER YOUR GUARD! *DIE, ACROYEAR!*

NO! YOU 3TIK3 PERISH, TYRANT!

MY BACK! MY BACK!

ACCURSED QUEEN! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?! WHAT ?!!

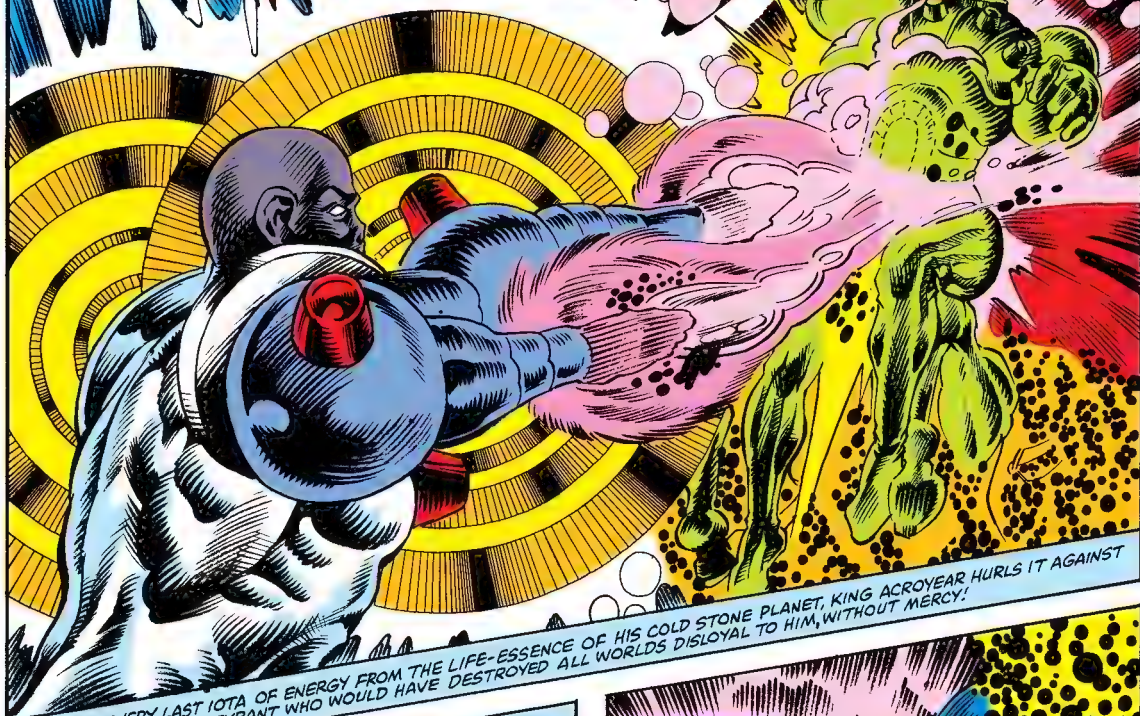
IMPLANTED IN KARZA'S BACK, QUEEN ESMERA'S STING BEGINS TO PARALYZE ARGON'S NEUROSYSTEM! THOUGH KARZA IS MERELY MENTAL ENERGY...

...HE CANNOT FUNCTION IN THE PHYSICAL REALM IF HIS HOST-BODY BE RENDERED HELPLESS!

ESMERA, EXPENDING HER ENERGIES THROUGH THE SUICIDE-STING, HAS ASSURED KARZA'S DEFEAT--

--AT THE COST OF HER OWN LIFE!

THE QUEEN OF KALIKLAK HAS SACRIFICED HERSELF TO WEAKEN YOU, MURDEROUS ONE! THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF SPARTAK TO PROVE THAT THEY CAN DO NO LESS!



DRAINING EVERY LAST IOTA OF ENERGY FROM THE LIFE-ESSENCE OF HIS COLD STONE PLANET, KING ACROYEAR HURLS IT AGAINST THE TYRANT WHO WOULD HAVE DESTROYED ALL WORLDS DISLOYAL TO HIM, WITHOUT MERCY!

A SHRILL SCREAM RINGS OUT IN THE SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBER...



MY MIND--MY MIND!
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY,
ACROYEAR-- **YOU'RE
TEARING APART
MY MIND!!**



YOUR MIND
AND MY
WORLD,
COMMANDER.

MAY ALL THAT
IS HOLY...
FORGIVE ME.

ANOTHER
SCREAM,
SHRILLER
THAN THE
FIRST--

-- AND BARON KARZA CEASES TO EXIST!

MUCH ELSE HAPPENS, ALL AT ONCE: TORN FROM KARZA, THE ALMIGHTY ENIGMA FORCE RETREATS FROM REALITY...

...AND FROM COMMANDER RANN'S REELING BRAIN, LEAVING OUR MICRONAUT MORE MIND-SHOCKED THAN EVER!



THE WORLDMIND ALSO DIES-- AND IT IS ACROYEAR'S SCREAM, NOT KARZA'S, THAT CHILLS THE BLOOD OF THOSE IN THE CHAMBER AS HE SENSES THE DEATH OF HIS FAR-OFF PLANET!

ALL IS SUDDENLY AS STILL AS THE GRAVE.

'TIS KING ARGON--MY BELOVED--FREED AT LONG LAST FROM THE SEMIHUMAN CENTAURION FORM INTO WHICH KARZA GENETICALLY ALTERED HIM...

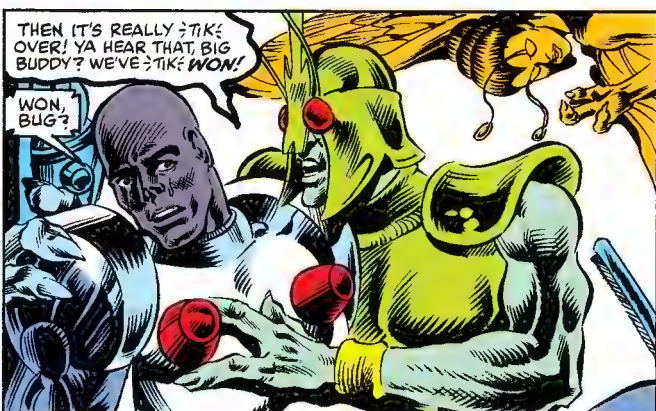
KARZA'S 3TIK2 GONE-- AN SOME NAKED GUY'S TAKEN HIS 3TIK2 PLACE!

...AND FREE IN HIS MIND FROM KARZA'S COMMANDS AS WELL!



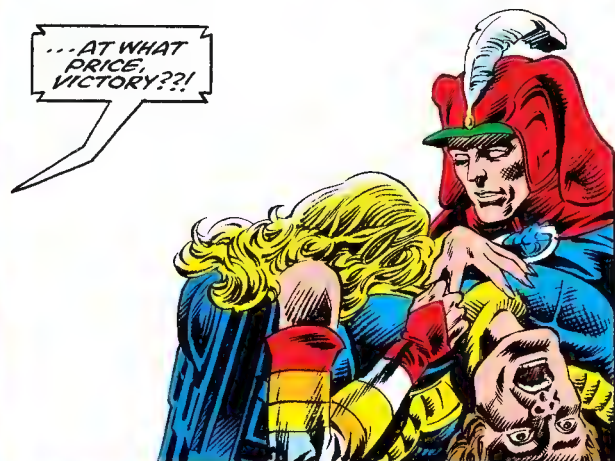
THEN IT'S REALLY 3TIK2 OVER! YA HEAR THAT, BIG BUDDY? WE'VE 3TIK2 WON!

WON, BUG?



LOOK ABOUT YOU, LITTLE ONE-- AT YOUR FALLEN QUEEN, AT THE WRECKAGE OF MY WORLD, AT OUR BRAIN-BLASTED COMMANDER-- AND ASK YOURSELF...

...AT WHAT PRICE, VICTORY??!



NEXT ISH: INTO THE MIND OF COMMANDER RANN...

IN SEARCH OF THE ENIGMA FORCE!

50¢

29
MAY
02714

MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

FROM THE PAGES OF *DOCTOR STRANGE*... THE ONE FOE NO MAN CAN DEFEAT--

NIGHTMARE!



PLUS...
A GUEST
APPEARANCE
BY THE
**HULK'S
DOG
SAMSON!**

broderick.80.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

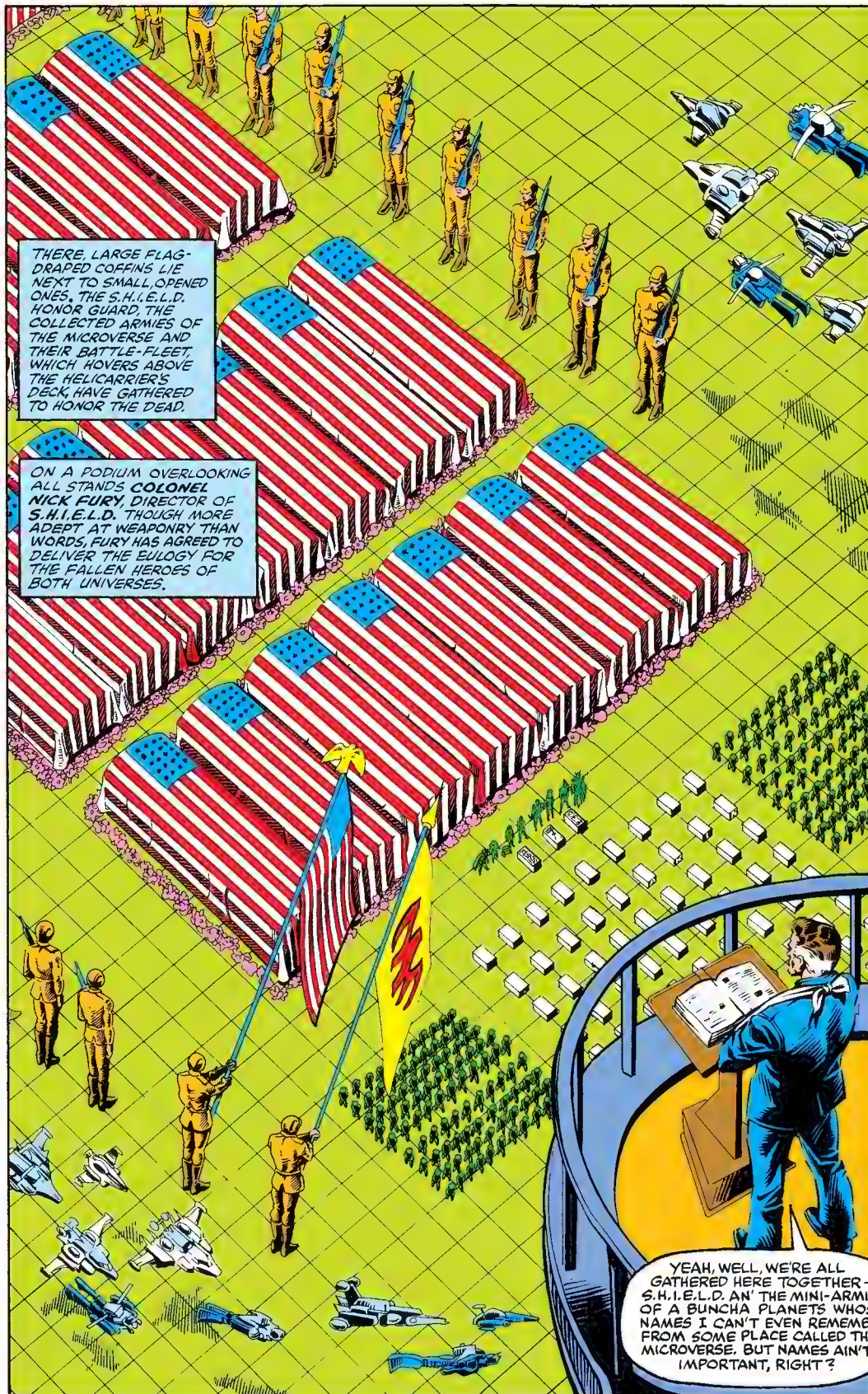
TO SLEEP...PERCHANCE TO DREAM!



THE BATTLE IS OVER...THE VICTORS ASSEMBLE TO HONOR THEIR DEAD.



THE
SOMBER SCENE
IS PLAYED OUT A
MILE ABOVE THE EARTH
ON THE OPEN DECK OF
THE HOVERING HELI-
CARRIER, COMMAND
CENTER FOR THE SUP-
REME HEADQUARTERS
INTERNATIONAL
ESPIONAGE LAW-
ENFORCEMENT
DIVISION...



THERE, LARGE FLAG-
DRAPED COFFINS LIE
NEXT TO SMALL, OPENED
ONES. THE S.H.I.E.L.D.
HONOR GUARD, THE
COLLECTED ARMIES OF
THE MICROVERSE AND
THEIR BATTLE FLEET,
WHICH HOVERS ABOVE
THE HELICARRIER'S
DECK, HAVE GATHERED
TO HONOR THE DEAD.

ON A PODIUM OVERLOOKING
ALL STANDS COLONEL
NICK FURY, DIRECTOR OF
S.H.I.E.L.D. THOUGH MORE
ADEPT AT WEAPONRY THAN
WORDS, FURY HAS AGREED TO
DELIVER THE EULOGY FOR
THE FALLEN HEROES OF
BOTH UNIVERSES.

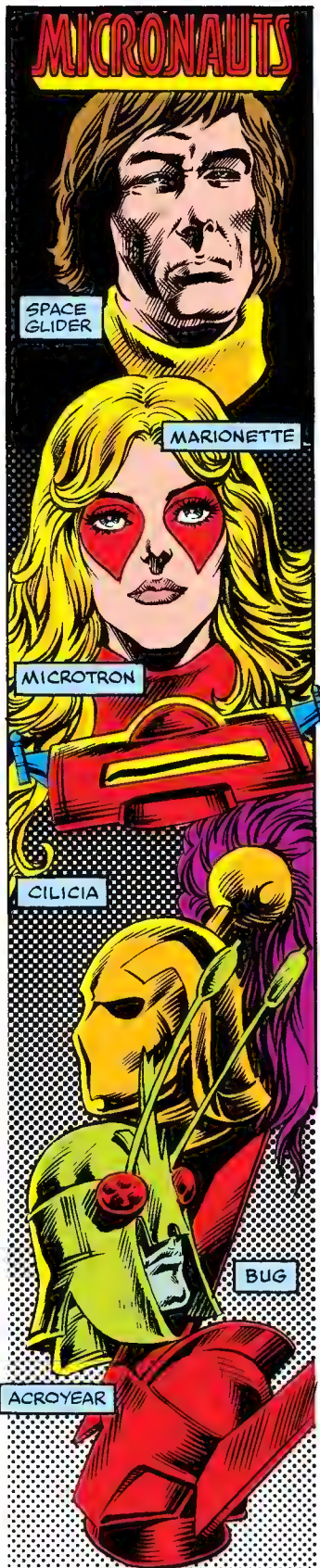
YEAH, WELL, WE'RE ALL
GATHERED HERE TOGETHER --
S.H.I.E.L.D. AN' THE MINI-ARMIES
OF A BUNCH PLANETS WHOSE
NAMES I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER
FROM SOME PLACE CALLED THE
MICROVERSE. BUT NAMES AIN'T
IMPORTANT, RIGHT?



WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT WE FOUGHT TO-
GETHER AN' DIED TOGETHER TA KEEP A SIX-INCH
HIGH HITLER CALLED **BARON KARZA** FROM
SKRAGGIN' BOTH EARTH AN' THE MICROVERSE
WITH HIS RENEGADE ARMIES AN' THE HORDES
OF **HYDRA** AT HIS COMMAND.

WE WON A BATTLE THE REST OF THE WORLD
AIN'T *NEVER* EVEN GONNA KNOW WE
FOUGHT-- IF I CAN HELP IT, THAT IS! YEAH,
WE WON--AN' DON'T LET NOBODY TELL YA
THAT THAT'S LESS IMPORTANT THAN
HOW YA PLAY THE GAME!

BUT I WANT ALL OF YA HERE TODAY TA KNOW
THAT WE COULDN'T HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
BEANS IF WE HADN'T HAD THE HELP OF A
GUTSY GROUP CALLED THE...



SPACE
GLIDER

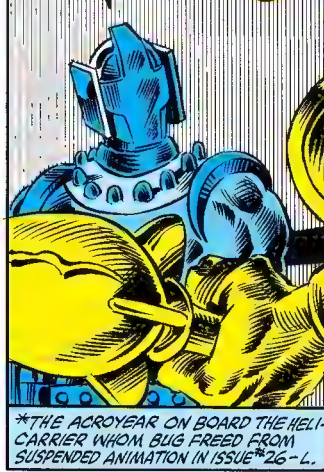
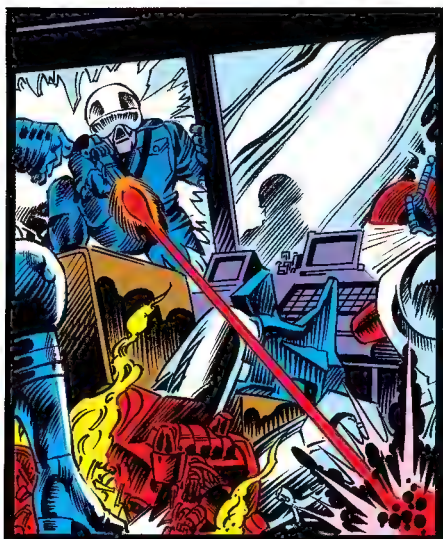
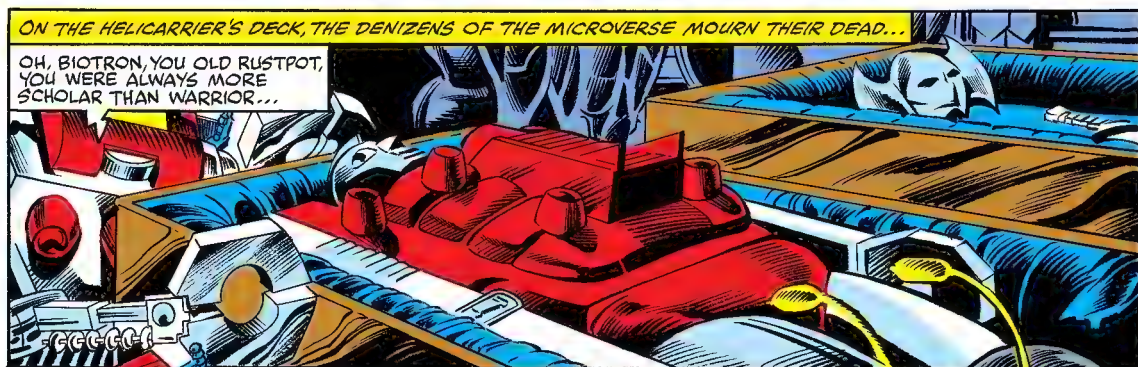
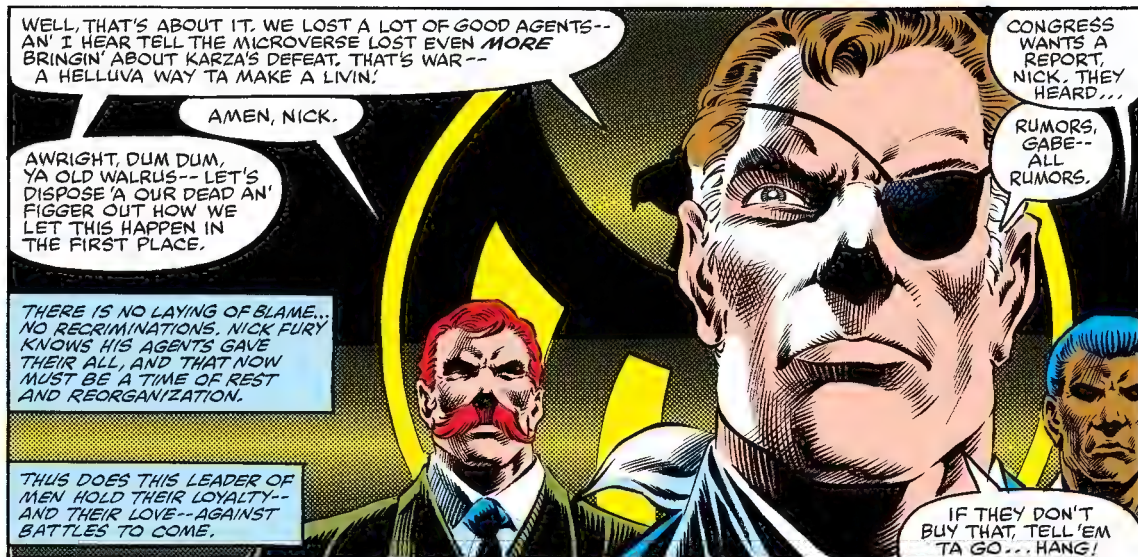
MARIONETTE

MICROTRON

CILICIA

BUG

ACROYEAR

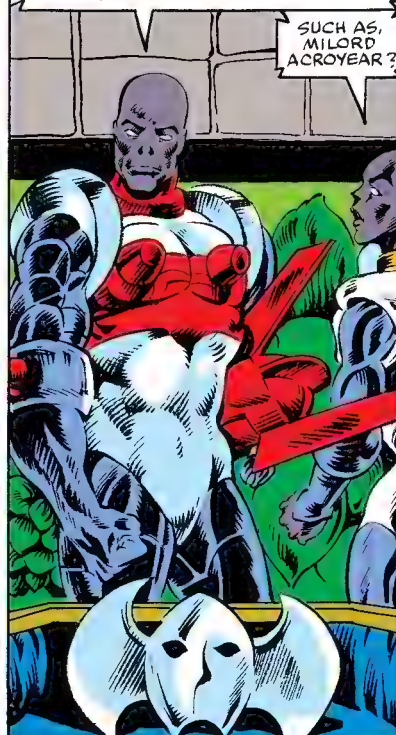


AYE, DAGON! QUEEN ESMERA SACRIFICED HER OWN LIFE TO DEFEAT KARZA, WHILE YOU HUNG BACK AND ALLOWED A MICRONAUT TO DIE!
YOU ARE A COWARD--



--AND THE PENALTY FOR COWARDICE ON OUR WARRIOR-WORLD, SPARTAK, IS...**DEATH!**

LET DAGON BE, MILADY CILICIA, EVEN COWARDS MAY REDEEM THEMSELVES, AS MY LATE BROTHER, SHAITAN, PROVED WHEN HE SABOTAGED KARZA'S CONQUEST IN THE VERY HOUR OF THE TYRANT'S TRIUMPH. BESIDES, THERE ARE OTHER...
GRAVER... CRIMES A MAN OF OUR RACE MAY COMMIT.



SUCH AS, MILORD ACROYEAR?

SUCH AS, MILADY, THE **MURDER OF OUR WORLD!**



DO YOU NOT YET **SEE** WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

SHAITAN SUMMONED THE WORLDMIND-- THE LIVING SOUL OF OUR PLANET, SPARTAK-- TO EARTH, TO GIVE HIM THE POWER TO OVERTHROW THE MASTER HE HATED AND FEARED...**BARON KARZA.**

BUT SHAITAN BURNED OUT, UNABLE TO WIELD THE WORLDMIND, I TOOK IT UP IN HIS STEAD--



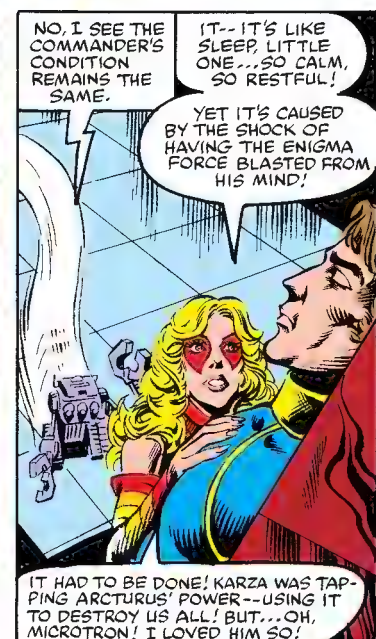
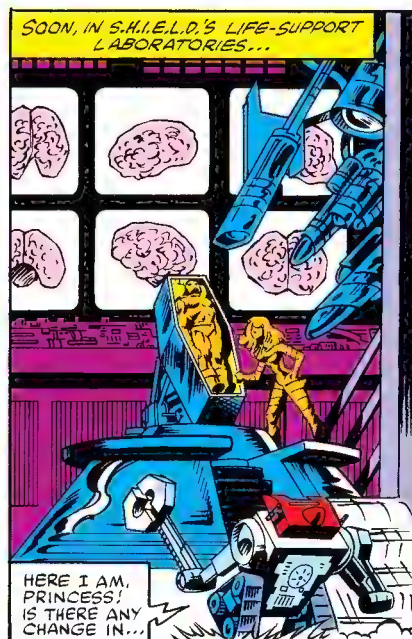
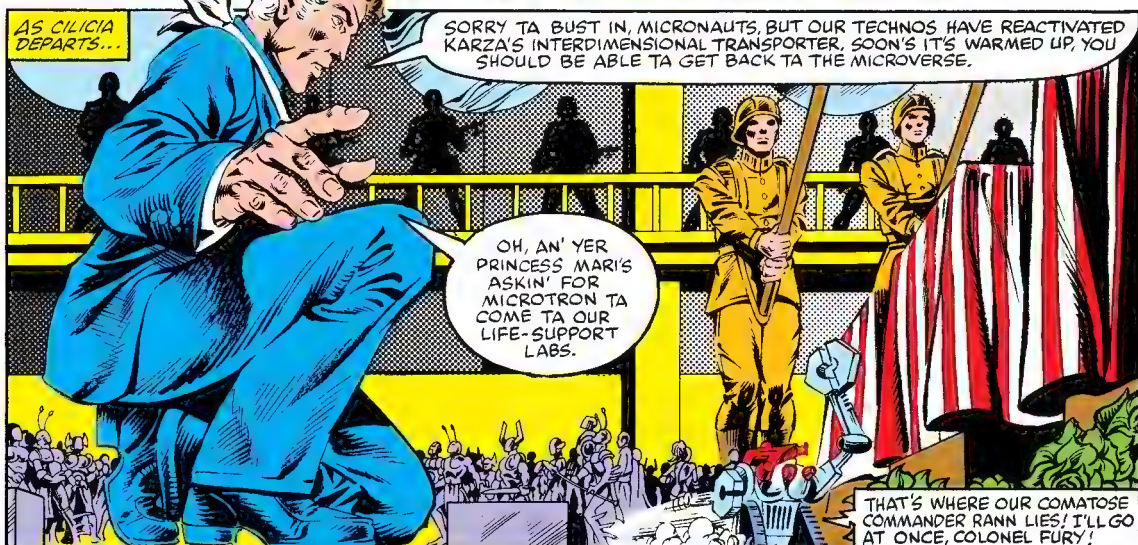
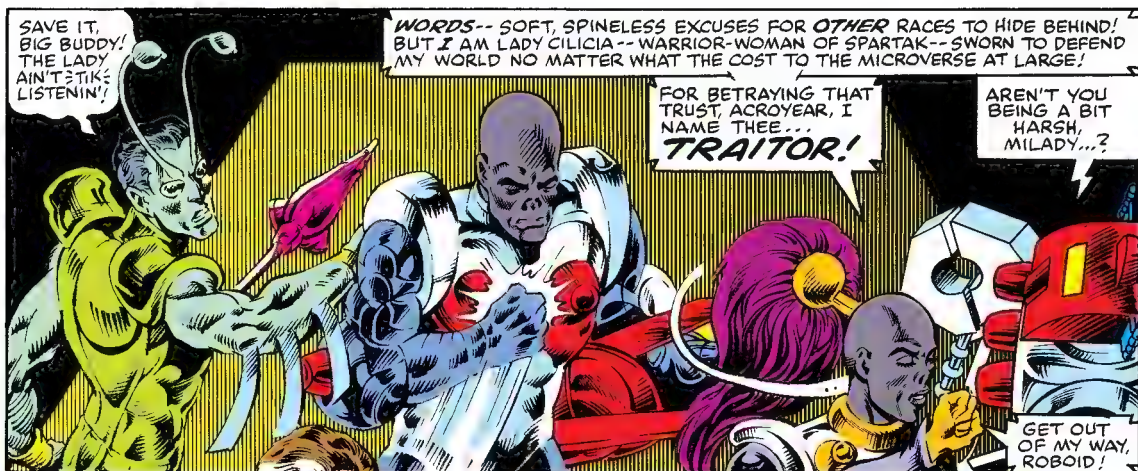
-- KNOWING FULL WELL THAT EXPENDING ITS POWER HERE ON EARTH WOULD DESTROY SPARTAK'S LIFE--
FORCE... FOREVER!

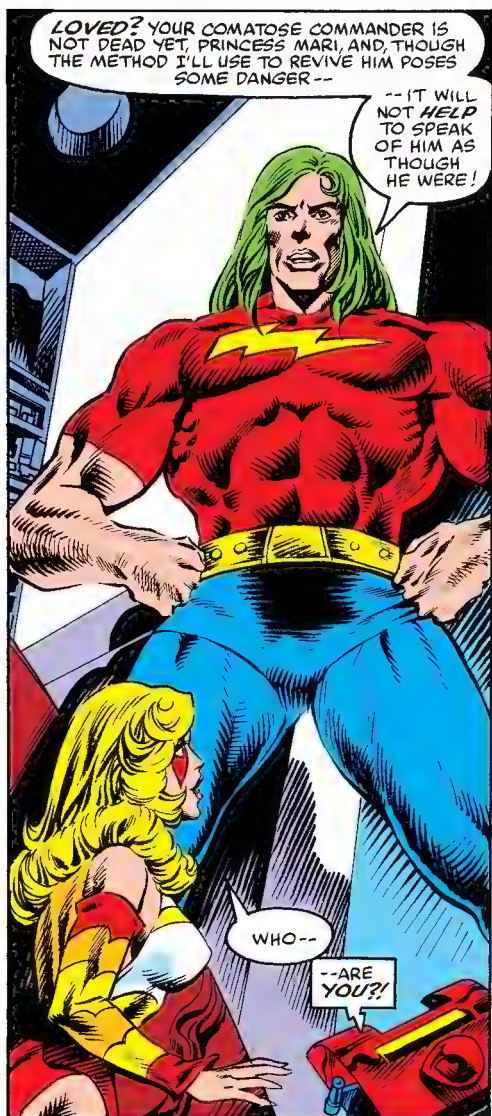
OUR WORLD IS **DEAD**?! OUR PEOPLE DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE MICROVERSE?! YOU SACRIFICED **ALL** WE HOLD DEAR...**TO SAVE EARTH??!**

EARTH **AND** THE MICROVERSE, CILICIA-- FOR IF ONE FELL TO KARZA, THE OTHER WOULD SURELY FOLLOW.

THE WORLDMIND UNDERSTOOD THE NECESSITY OF SUCH A SACRIFICE, BELOVED...







LOVED? YOUR COMATOSE COMMANDER IS NOT DEAD YET, PRINCESS MARI, AND, THOUGH THE METHOD I'LL USE TO REVIVE HIM POSES SOME DANGER--

--IT WILL NOT HELP TO SPEAK OF HIM AS THOUGH HE WERE!

WHO--

--ARE YOU?!

DR. LEONARD SAMSON, PSYCHOLOGIST-- A SPECIALIST IN TREATING TRAUMAS OF THE BRAIN. SINCE I'VE ACTUALLY HAD EXPERIENCE WITH SUBMICROSCOPIC RACES,*S.H.I.E.L.D. ASKED FOR MY HELP.

YOUR... FRIEND... SEEMS TO HAVE RECEIVED QUITE A MIND-SHOCK--WHICH HAS COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN THE RIGHT SIDE OF HIS BRAIN.

*SEE PAST ISSUES OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK -- LOUISE.

FURY TELLS ME THAT SOME EVIL ENTITY TAPPED INTO A GOD-LIKE FORCE IN THE COMMANDER'S MIND.

THAT FITS A CURRENT PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY THAT, IN ANCIENT TIMES, ALL HUMANS WERE DIRECTED BY 'GOD VOICES'. THESE WERE, IN REALITY, THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN TELLING THE LEFT SIDE HOW TO REACT IN NOVEL SITUATIONS.

WITH THE RISE OF WHAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AS 'HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS,' THE 'GOD VOICES' RECEDED AND THIS SO-CALLED 'BICAMERAL MIND' BROKE DOWN AS THE TWO SIDES OF THE BRAIN BEGAN TO ACT IN UNISON.*

COMMANDER RANN'S 'GOD VOICE' WAS REAL, SIR--AND VERY POWERFUL! HE'D RECEIVED IT FROM THE ENIGMA FORCE-- THE POWER WHICH MAINTAINS A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN OUR UNIVERSE AND YOURS, AND KEEPS THEM FROM COLLIDING INTO EACH OTHER IN A VIOLENT COSMIC UPRHEAVAL!

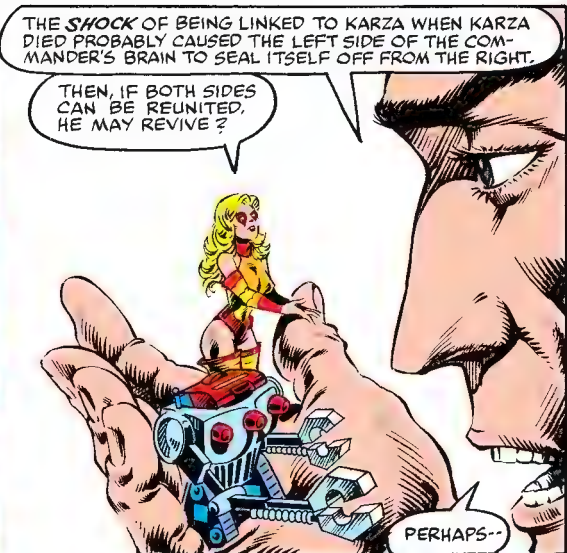
*FOR A MORE COMPLETE EXPOSITION OF THIS THESIS, SEE DR. JULIAN JAYNES' THE ORIGIN OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE BREAKDOWN OF THE BICAMERAL MIND. NO KIDDING! LOUISE.



BARON KARZA, A TYRANT FROM OUR MICROVERSE, HAD MIND-BOUND THE COMMANDER'S LINK WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE. KARZA, THEN, CONTROLLED THAT AWESOME POWER, AND SO MATTERS STOOD WHEN ACROYEAR DESTROYED HIM!

COMMANDER RANN HAS BEEN LIKE THIS EVER SINCE.

STILL, I DOUBT THAT THE *ENIGMA FORCE*, ITSELF, COULD BE DESTROYED.



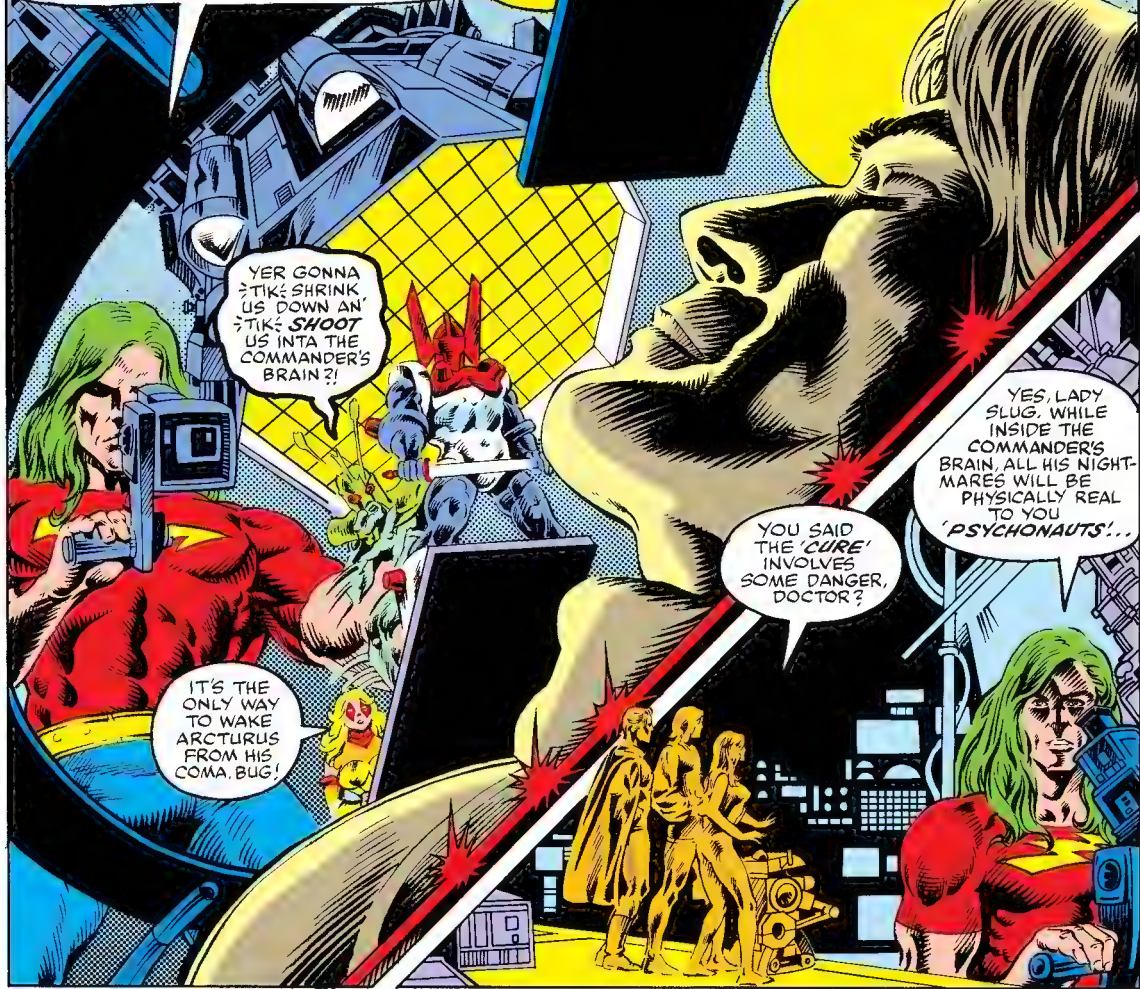
THE *SHOCK* OF BEING LINKED TO KARZA WHEN KARZA DIED PROBABLY CAUSED THE LEFT SIDE OF THE COMMANDER'S BRAIN TO SEAL ITSELF OFF FROM THE RIGHT.

THEN, IF BOTH SIDES CAN BE REUNITED, HE MAY REVIVE?

PERHAPS--

-- BUT MY INSTRUMENTS DETECT SOME STRANGE *OUTSIDE FORCE* WORKING WITHIN HIS MIND, KEEPING HIM IN HIS COMATOSE STATE. THAT'S WHY I'VE SUMMONED YOU ALL HERE AND READIED THE *PSYCHOTRON CANNON*. WE MUST ACT-- QUICKLY-- IF WE ARE TO SAVE YOUR LEADER!

UNHEARING, UNFEELING, COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN LIES AS STILL AS DEATH AS THE PREPARATIONS THAT WILL SAVE HIS LIFE GO ON AROUND HIM.

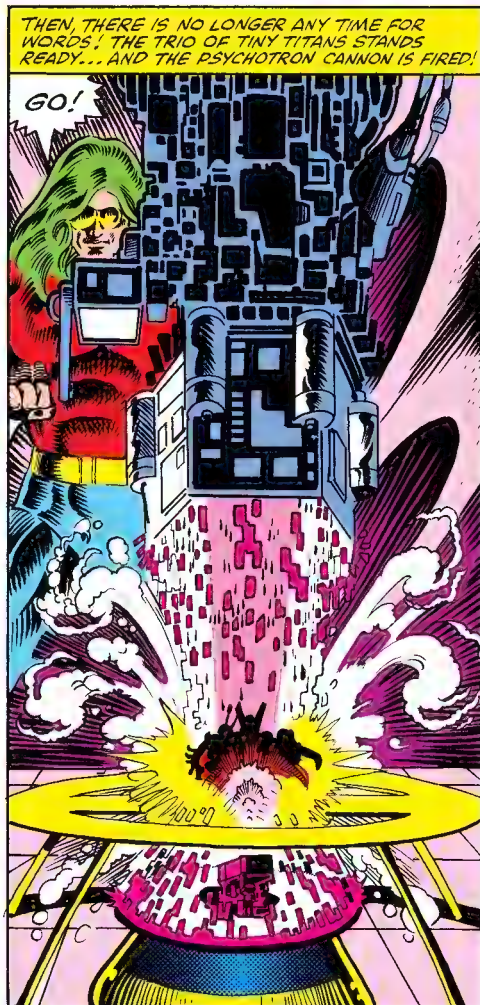


YER GONNA
-TIK- SHRINK
US DOWN AN
-TIK- SHOOT
US INTO THE
COMMANDER'S
BRAIN?!

IT'S THE
ONLY WAY
TO WAKE
ARCTURUS
FROM HIS
COMA, BUG!

YOU SAID
THE '*CURE*'
INVOLVES
SOME DANGER,
DOCTOR?

YES, LADY
SLUG, WHILE
INSIDE THE
COMMANDER'S
BRAIN, ALL HIS NIGHT-
MARES WILL BE
PHYSICALLY REAL
TO YOU
'*PSYCHONAUTS*'...

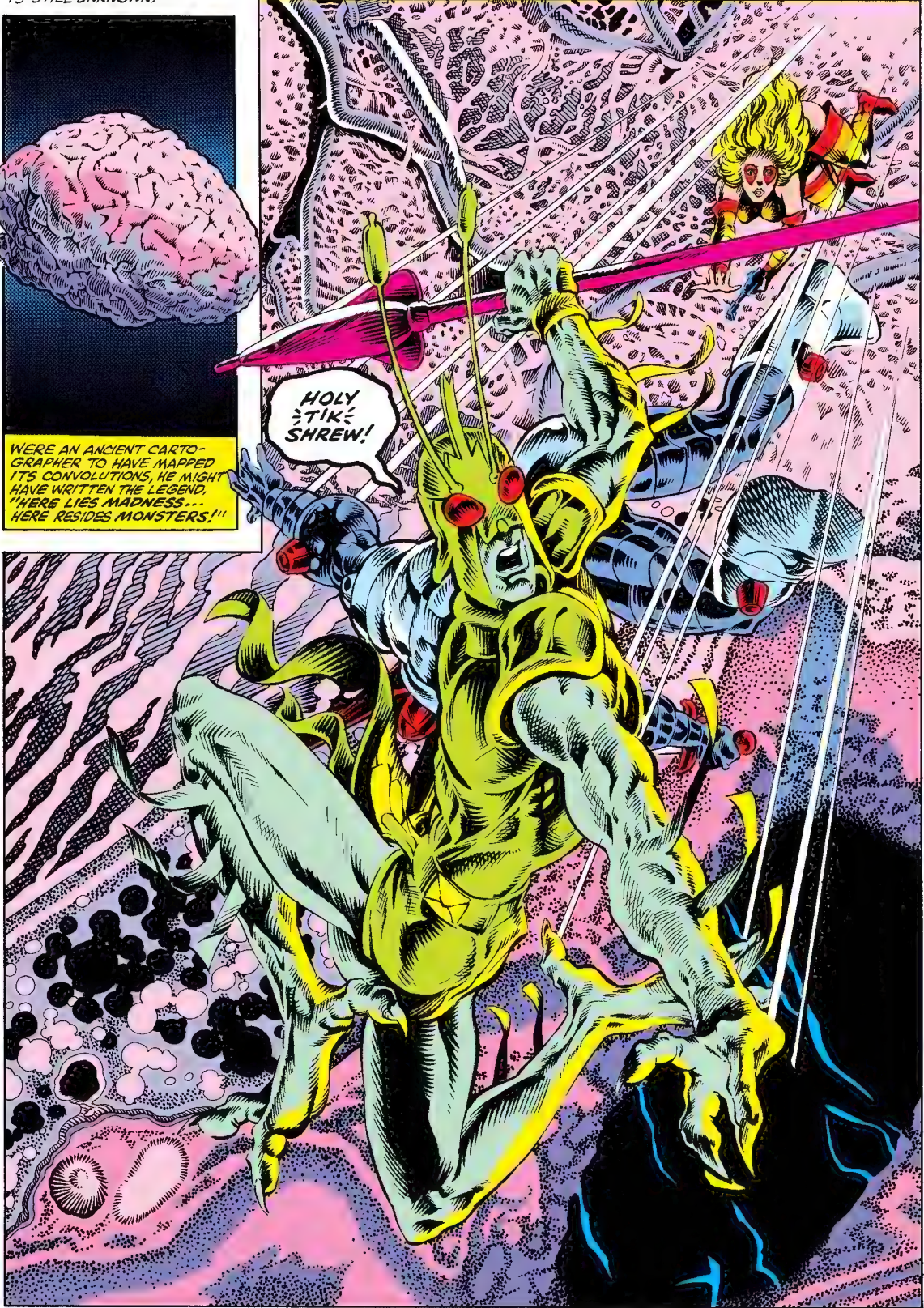


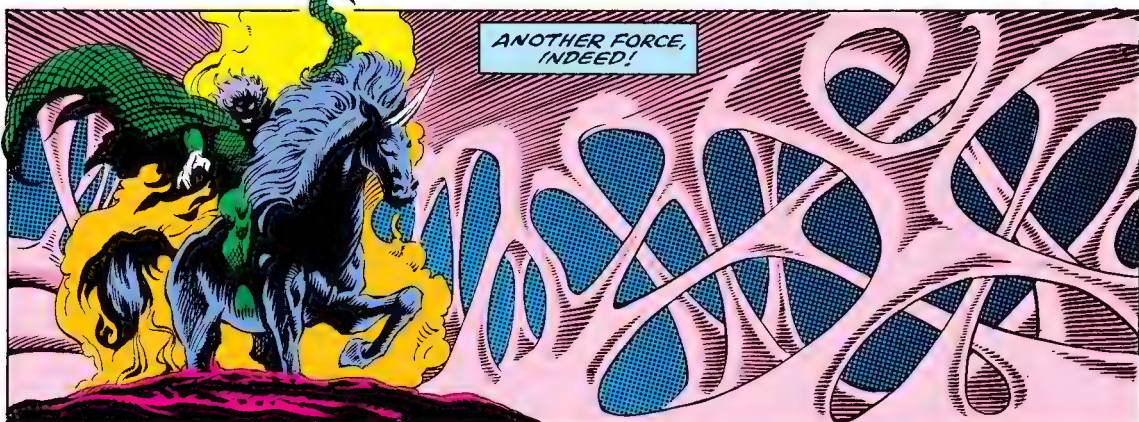
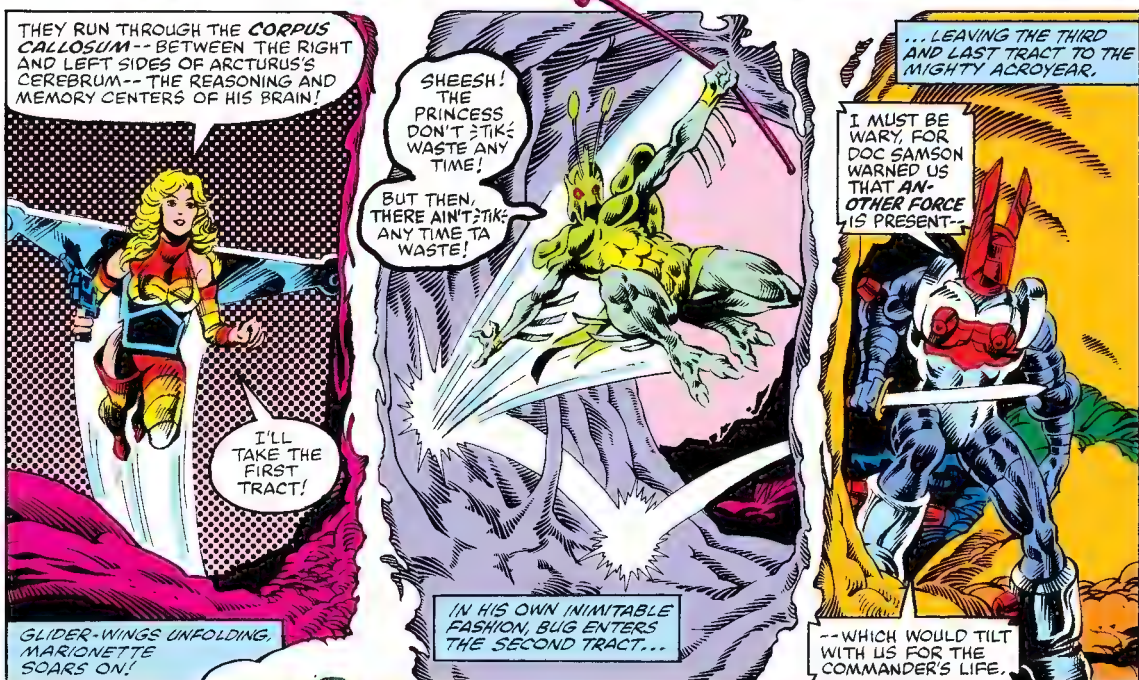
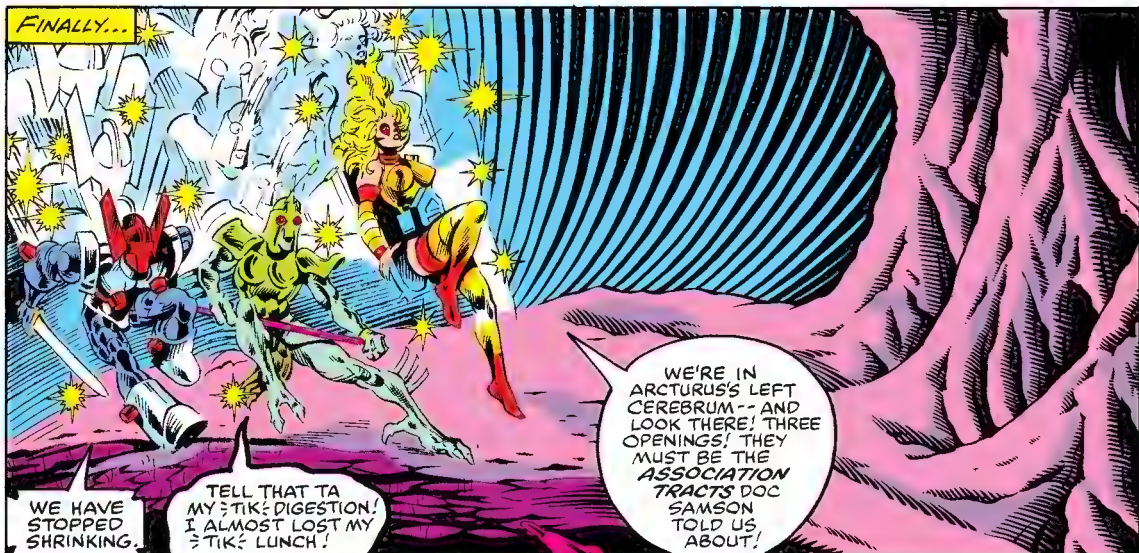
THE BRAIN OF MAN: FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN LEARNED ABOUT IT, SO MUCH MORE IS STILL UNKNOWN.

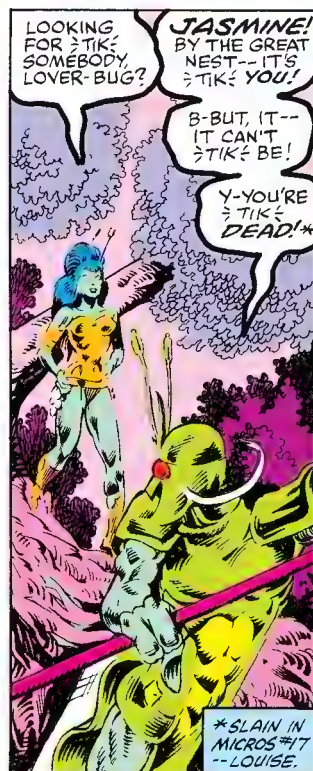
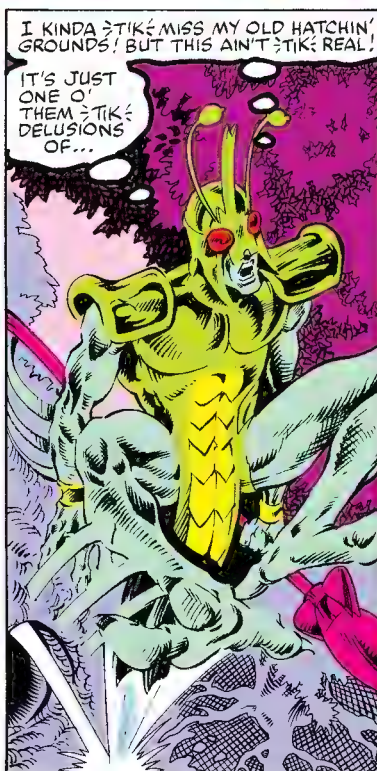
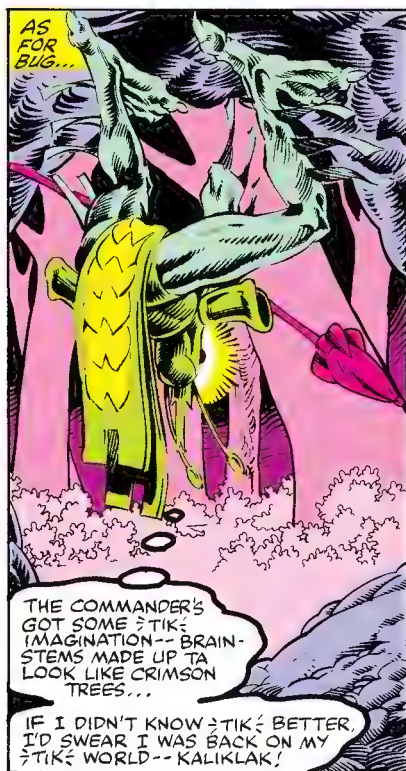
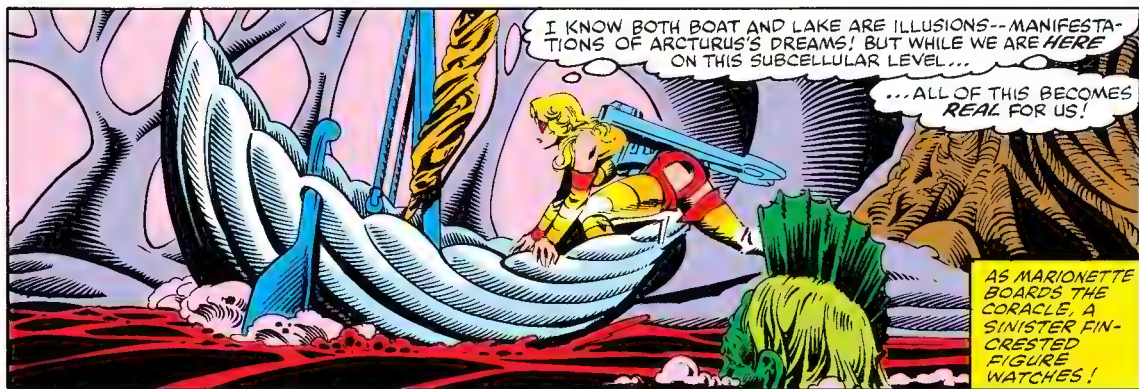
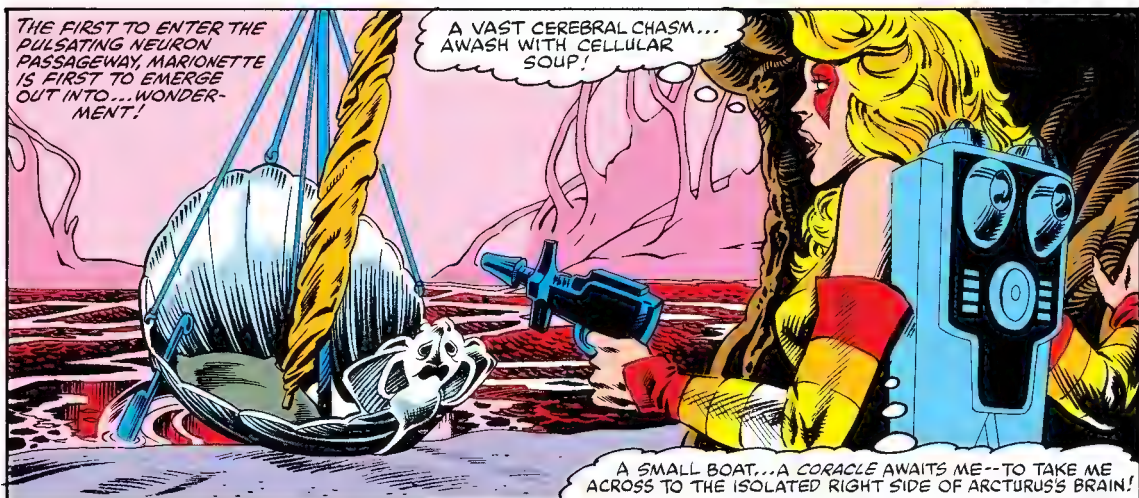


WERE AN ANCIENT CARTOGRAPHER TO HAVE MAPPED ITS CONVOLUTIONS, HE MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN THE LEGEND, "HERE LIES MADNESS... HERE RESIDES MONSTERS!"

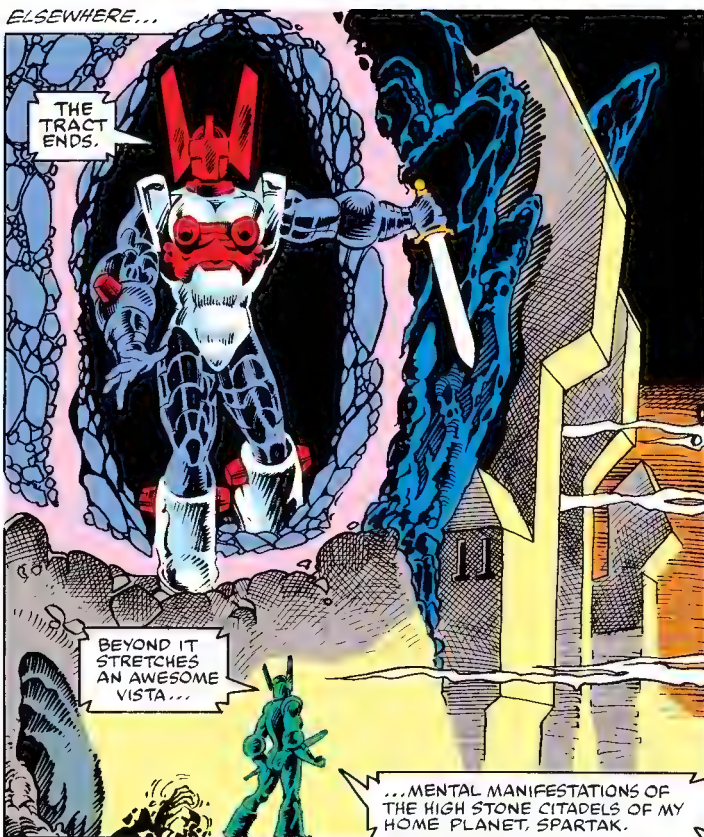
AND HERE-- REDUCED TO A SUBCELLULAR LEVEL AND PROJECTED INTO THE LEFT CEREBRUM OF THEIR FELLOW-MICRONAUT-- MARIONETTE, ACROYEAR, AND THE IRREPRESSIBLE BUG, VOYAGE ON A FEAR-FRAUGHT QUEST TO SAVE COMMANDER RANN!



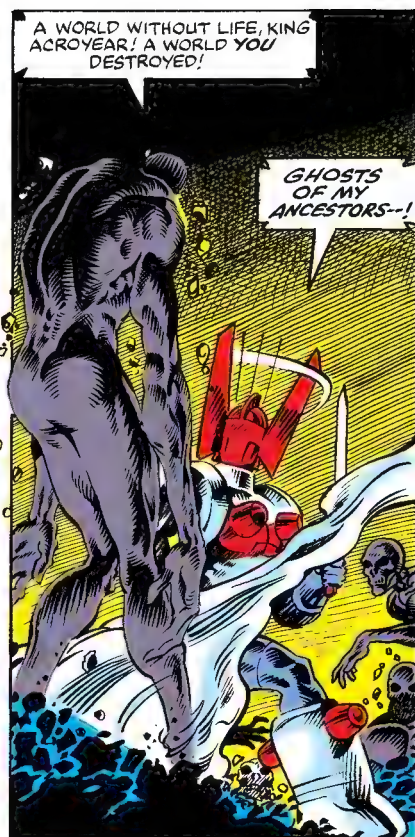




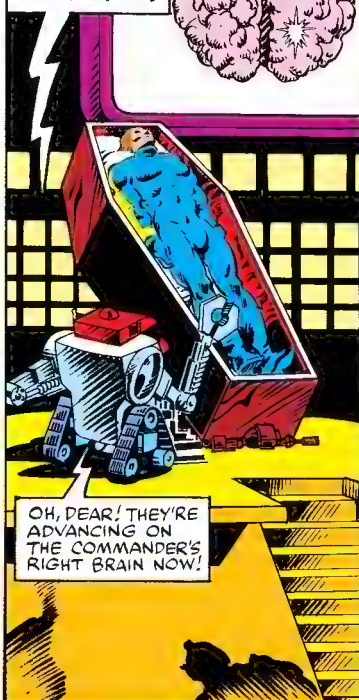
ELSEWHERE...



A WORLD WITHOUT LIFE, KING ACROYEAR! A WORLD YOU DESTROYED!

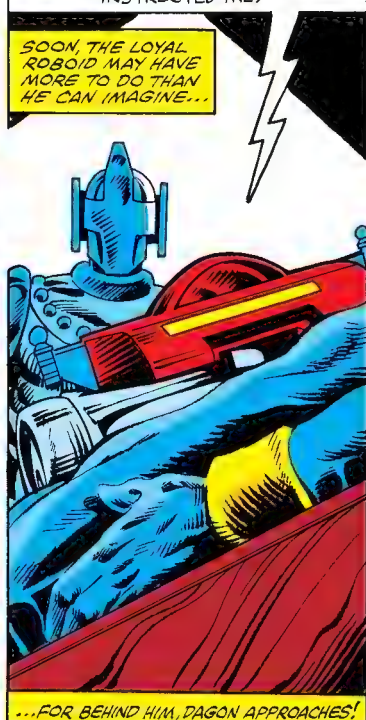


IF THE MICRO-NAUTS ARE KILLED IN COMMANDER RANN'S DREAMS, THEIR DEATHS WILL BE REAL!



I DO WISH THEY'D HURRY! MY CAPACITATORS ARE OVERHEATING WITH SUSPENSE AND I AM HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING BUT MONITOR THEIR PROGRESS, AS DR. SAMSON INSTRUCTED ME.

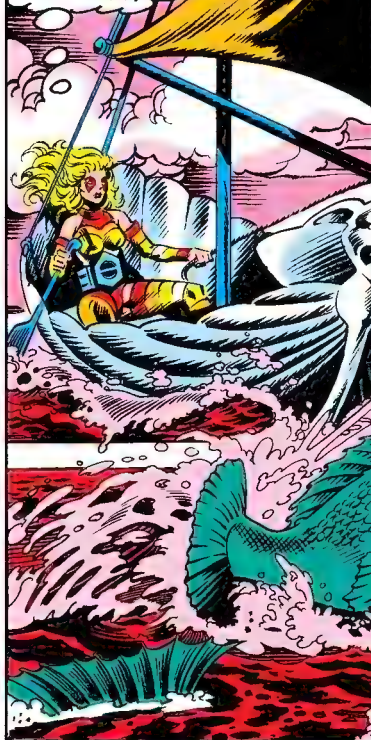
SOON, THE LOYAL ROBODID MAY HAVE MORE TO DO THAN HE CAN IMAGINE...



MEANWHILE, CONTINUING HER VOYAGE
INSIDE COMMANDER RANN'S BRAIN,
MARIONETTE PONDERES...

WHY WOULD ARCTURUS CHOOSE
THIS IMAGERY? IT'S LIKE NOTHING
HE WOULD HAVE EXPERIENCED
WITHIN OUR MICROVERSE.

THEN AGAIN, PERHAPS
THE IMAGERY IS
NOT HIS...



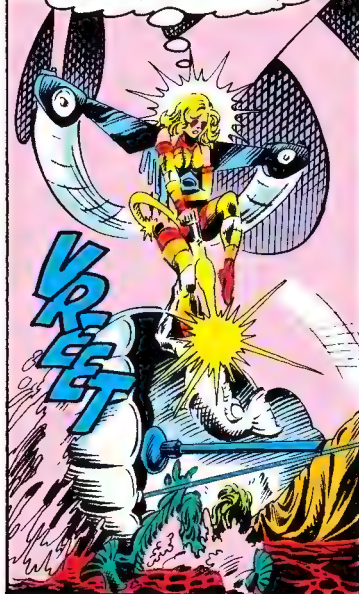
DALLAN AND SEPSIS--
AMPHIBIANS!

THEY RISE FROM THE DEPTHS
OF THE BLOOD-RED LAKE WITH
SCALY SKINS THE PALLOR OF
DEATH! MARIONETTE GAGS IN
HORROR AND REVULSION AS
THEIR WEBBED CLAWS REACH
TO DRAG HER FROM HER
BOBBING CRAFT!



THEN THE PROUD HOMEWORLD
PRINCESS REGAINS HER COMPOSURE,
AND...

GOT TO LOFT AWAY VIA
MY GLIDER-WINGS BEFORE THEY
SWAMP THE BOAT--!



THEY MAY BE WOVEN OF THE
STUFF OF DREAMS, BUT THEY
FEAR MY LASERSONIC ALL THE
SAME!



GAINING ALTITUDE WHICH PUTS HER
BEYOND THE REACH OF THE REPULSIVE
AMPHIBIANS, MARIONETTE IS SUDDENLY
ASTONISHED TO SEE...



AND THAT
STRANGE GLOW
AT ITS PINNACLE--!
IT'S RESOLVING
ITSELF INTO...



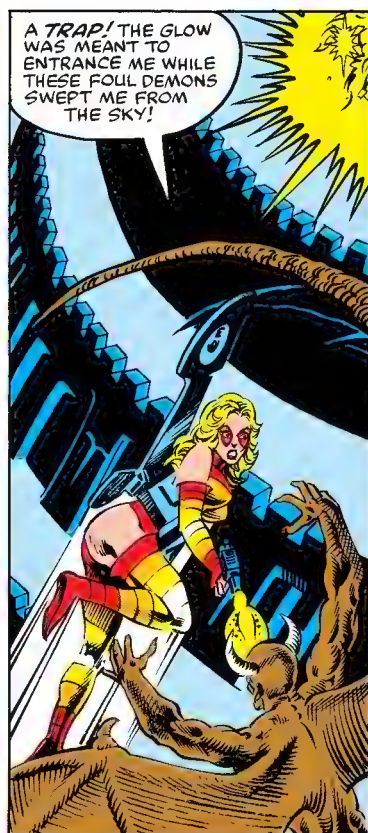
...THE **TIME TRAVELER**, THE EMISSARY OF THE **ENIGMA** FORCE WHO WAS GIVEN LIFE AND FORM BY ARCTURUS'S MIND. BUT WE THOUGHT IT WAS ERASED WHEN **BARON KARZA**--WHO HAD BOUND IT TO HIS WILL-- WAS DESTROYED!

THE **ETHEREAL** ENTITY SEEMS TO BECKON...



BEAUTIFUL...SO BEAUTIFUL!

ALL ELSE IS FORGOTTEN UNTIL A NEAR RUSTLE OF LEATHERN WINGS PULLS HER BACK TO REALITY!



A **TRAP!** THE GLOW WAS MEANT TO ENTRANCE ME WHILE THESE FOUL DEMONS SWEEP ME FROM THE SKY!



BUT WHY WOULD ARCTURUS TURN AGAINST ME--LULL ME WITH FAMILIAR IMAGES AND THEN ATTACK ME?!

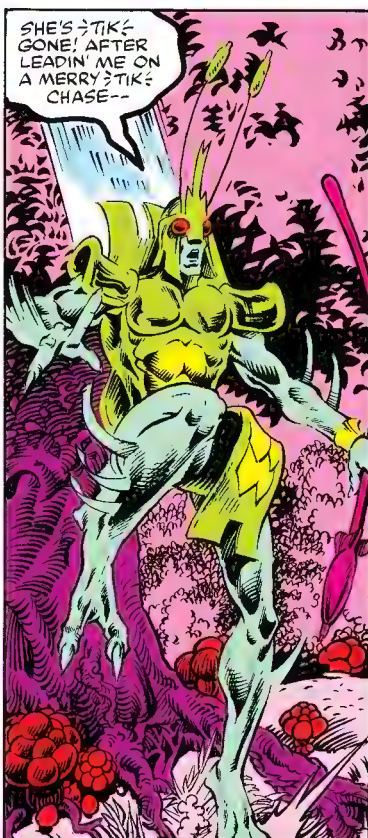
HE WOULD NOT, MY DEAR--BUT I WOULD!

MARIONETTE'S CRY IS MUFFLED...



...AND THUS UNHEARD THE WIDTH OF A NEURON WALL AWAY WHERE BUG PURSUES--A DREAM!

JASMINE, BABY! COME **ËTİKË** BACK!



SHE'S **ËTİKË** GONE! AFTER LEADIN' ME ON A MERRY **ËTİKË** CHASE--



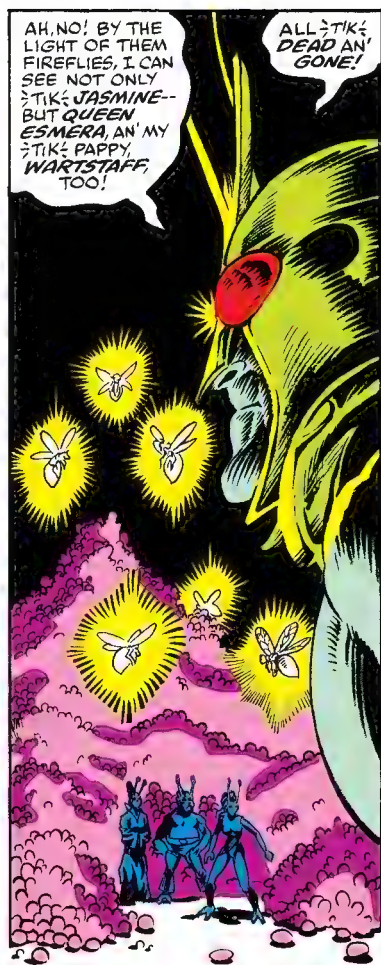
--TO THE 3-TIK NEST! HOLY SHREW! THIS IS THE 3-TIK PLACE WHERE I WAS HATCHED...



... BUT THE NEST WAS NEVER 3-TIK: PART OF THE COM-MANDER'S MEMORIES!

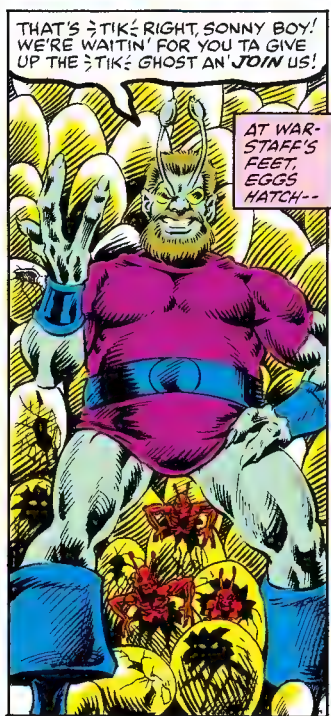
SO I DUNNO 3-TIK: WHAT IT'S DOIN' HERE!

BUT I INTEND TA 3-TIK: FIND OUT!



AH, NO! BY THE LIGHT OF THEM FIREFLIES, I CAN SEE NOT ONLY 3-TIK: JASMINE-- BUT QUEEN ESMERA, AN MY 3-TIK: PAPPY, WARTSTAFF, TOO!

ALL 3-TIK: DEAD AN' GONE!



THAT'S 3-TIK: RIGHT, SONNY BOY! WE'RE WAITIN' FOR YOU TA GIVE UP THE 3-TIK: GHOST AN' JOIN US!

AT WAR-STAFF'S FEET, EGGS HATCH--



--DISGORING THE SKELETONS OF COUNTLESS EMBRYO INSECTIVORIDS WHICH BEGIN TO SWARM ALL OVER BUG!

DEATH ALL AROUND ME! I GET THE 3-TIK: MESSAGE! IF COMMANDER RANN AN' THE ENIGMA FORCE AIN'T 3-TIK: REVIVED--

-- THEN EVERYTHIN' I KNOW 3-TIK: AN' LOVE'LL... DIE!



OR PERHAPS PASS INTO THAT TWILIGHT STATE OVER WHICH I HOLD SWAY!

BUG GAPS! IS THIS NEW DREAM AN IMAGE...

...OR NIGHTMARE?!!

CENTIMETERS AWAY, AN ENERGY SWORD SLASHES AND SEARS AS THE MIGHTY KING ACROYEAR WONDERS THE SAME THING.

COMMANDER RANN WAS BRAIN-BLASTED INTO A COMA *BEFORE* I REVEALED THAT, IN WIELDING THE WORLD MIND TO DESTROY BARON KARZA, I HAD ALSO DESTROYED SPARTAK'S LIFE-FORCE.

THESE SPARTAKIAN SPECTERS SHOULD FORM NO PART OF THE COMMANDER'S MEMORIES.

CORRECT, MILORD ACROYEAR! THEY ARE THE HAUNTED HORRORS OF YOUR GUILT MADE REAL!

CILICIA? NO, AN ILLUSION... BUT AGAIN, ONE WROUGHT FROM MY MEMORIES AND MY MIS-GIVINGS, *NOT* THE COMMANDER'S.

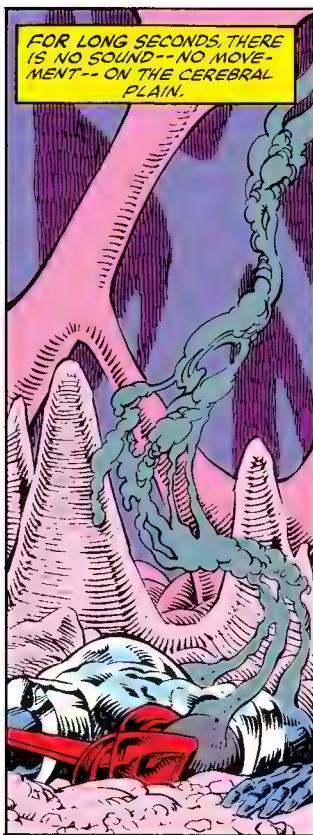
I SUSPECT THAT THE 'OTHER FORCE' OF WHICH WE WERE FORE-WARNED IS THUS MANIPULATING MY MIND...

...AND I WILL NOT FIGHT MYSELF.

FOOL! DEATH IN THIS DREAM-STATE IS NO LESS PERMANENT!

SSLAASH

HAVING DRIVEN HOME HER DEATH-BLOW, THE LADY CILICIA... VANISHES.



FOR LONG SECONDS, THERE IS NO SOUND--NO MOVEMENT-- ON THE CEREBRAL PLAIN.



THEN...

I LIVE.

THE VISION SOUGHT TO DESTROY ME WITH MY OWN GUILT-- BUT I HAD NOTHING TO BE GUILTY OF.

I WAS *ONE* WITH THE WORLDMIND, THE LIFE-FORCE OF SPARTAK. IT UNDERSTOOD THAT OUR WORLD *HAD* TO BE SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO SAVE BOTH EARTH AND THE ENTIRE MICRO-VERSE FROM KARZA.



FURTHER, THE WORLDMIND ALSO REALIZED THAT MY ONCE-PEACEFUL RACE HAD BECOME TOO WARLIKE DWELLING ON ITS HARSH, STONE SURFACE. IT HOPED THAT THEY MIGHT ONCE AGAIN REGAIN THEIR HUMANITY IF THEY WERE FORCED TO WANDER THE STARS IN SEARCH OF A NEW HOME.

IT SEEMS, DREAM-WEAVER, THAT YOU HAVE MISREAD MY NIGHTMARES.



A PITY, LORD ACROYEAR-- BUT HOW WAS I TO KNOW THAT YOU HAD EXPUNGED ALL FEELINGS OF GUILT ABOUT YOUR DESTRUCTION OF YOUR WORLD? STILL, MY LITTLE DRAMA SERVED ITS PURPOSE!

I KNEW YOUR *OWN* DREAMS COULD NOT *SLAY* YOU-- BUT THEY HAVE KEPT YOU FROM AWAKENING YOUR COMATOSE COMMANDER RANN!

AND THAT WAS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF...*NIGHTMARE!*



I NEEDED NO INTRODUCTORY BOASTS TO GUESS AT YOUR VILLAINY, NIGHTMARE. BUT WHY DO YOU WISH COMMANDER RANN TO REMAIN IN THIS SLEEP-STATE?

THE SLUMBERING RIGHT SIDE OF HIS BRAIN CONTAINS AN AWESOME SECRET-- THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE *ENIGMA FORCE!*

WITH COMMANDER RANN ASLEEP, HUMANKIND HAS NO CONDUIT THROUGH WHICH TO CONTACT THE AWESOME **ENIGMA FORCE**, OR ITS COUNTERPART HERE ON EARTH, THE **UNIPOWER!** *

HOLY SHIT! SHREW! WARTSTAFF DIS-APPEARED, AN' IN HIS PLACE THERE'S...

SHK ROW

*SEE RECENT ISSUE OF MARVEL SPOTLIGHT WITH CAPT. UNIVERSE -- L.

...**YOU**-- THE REAL ENEMY WHO SEEKS TO KEEP ARCTURUS FROM AWAKENING,

AYE, WOMAN! FOR WITHOUT THE ENIGMA FORCE--

--TWO UNIVERSES WILL SLIP INTO CHAOS, CONFLAGRATION...AND NIGHTMARE!

REALIZING THAT THE TIME FOR PRETENSE HAS PASSED, NIGHTMARE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO ALL THREE MICRONAUTS...

...WHILE A FOURTH--MICROTRON--SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF UNDER ATTACK!

AWAY FROM THE LIFE-SUPPORT COUCH, ROBOD!

DAGON! WHAT DO YOU--?!

WANT? TO FULFILL MY MISSION! TO **SLAY** COMMANDER RANN!

OVER MY DEAD CHASSIS, YOU WILL!

I SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED YOU FROM THE FIRST! IT WAS TOO CONVENIENT, BUG'S FINDING YOU HERE AT S.H.I.E.L.D. JUST BEFORE OUR BATTLE WITH KARZA...!

I WAS **PLANTED** HERE! BIOTRON SUSPECTED--AND I SLEW HIM!

BY **BARON KARZA**, TO ENSURE THAT--IN THE EVENT OF HIS DEATH--THE WIELDER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE WOULD ALSO DIE!

PLANTED? BY WHOM? FOR WHAT?!

UNAWARE THAT ONLY LITTLE MICROTRON STANDS BETWEEN COMMANDER RANN AND DESTRUCTION THE REMAINING MICRONAUTS CONTINUE THEIR QUEST TO UNIFY THE TWO HALVES OF THE COMMANDER'S BRAIN!

I UNLOADED MY Σ TIK Σ ROCKET-LANCE AT THAT GRINNIN' GHOUL NIGHTMARE-- AN' HE UP AN' Σ TIK Σ VANISHED! WHERE...?!



HERE, BUG-- BEFORE THE 'DEAD WALL' SEPARATING THE RIGHT AND LEFT SIDES OF THE COMMANDER'S BRAIN!

ONCE WE RECOGNIZED THAT NIGHTMARE-- AND NOT COMMANDER RANN-- WAS THE CREATOR OF THE DREAM-STATES IN WHICH WE FOUND OURSELVES, THE ILLUSIONS DIS-APPEARED.



YOU ARE AWARE OF ME, BUT AS YET I HAVE KEPT MY PRESENCE HIDDEN FROM YOUR SLEEPING COMMANDER! NOW I WILL CONTACT HIM AND HIS MIND WILL REACT TO ME AS IT WOULD TO A CANCEROUS CELL...

...PRODUCING ANTI-BODIES WHICH ARE AIMED AT ME BUT WHICH WILL DESTROY YOU, HIS FRIENDS, A MASSIVE HEMORRHAGING WILL RESULT AND HE WILL NEVER RECOVER TO CALL FORTH THE ENIGMA FORCE AGAIN!



THRICE-CURSED TRICKSTER! BEFORE YOU DO THAT, YOU SHALL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE MICRONAUTS!

STRIKE, BUG-- FOR COMMANDER RANN.

VREET

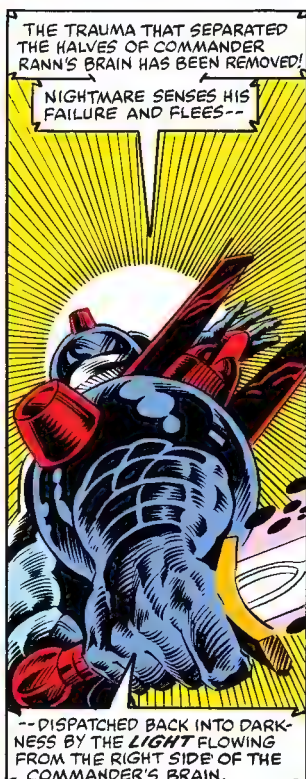
YA NEEDED TA Σ TIK Σ TELL ME?



HA! YOU MISSED ME!

BUT YOU'RE NOT AIMING AT ME-- BUT AT THE 'DEAD WALL'!

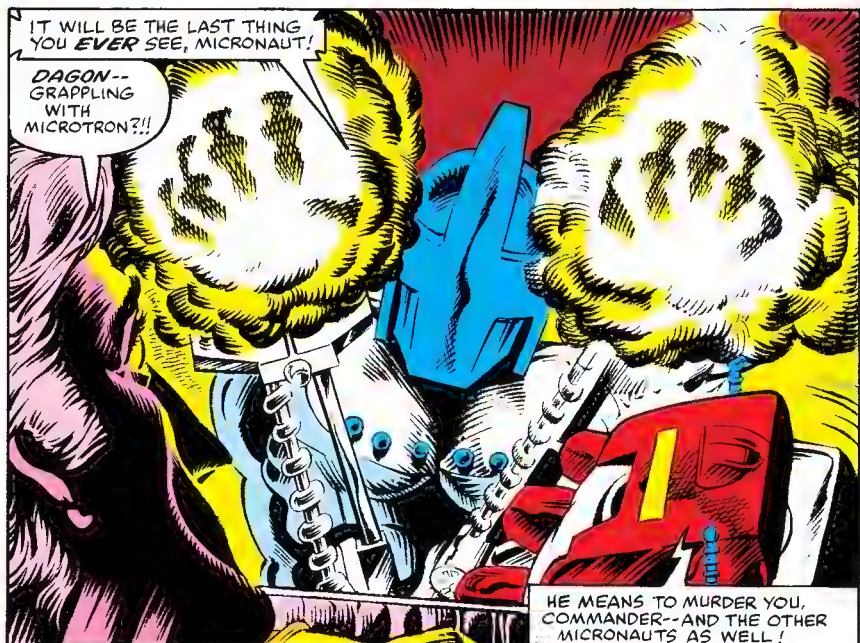
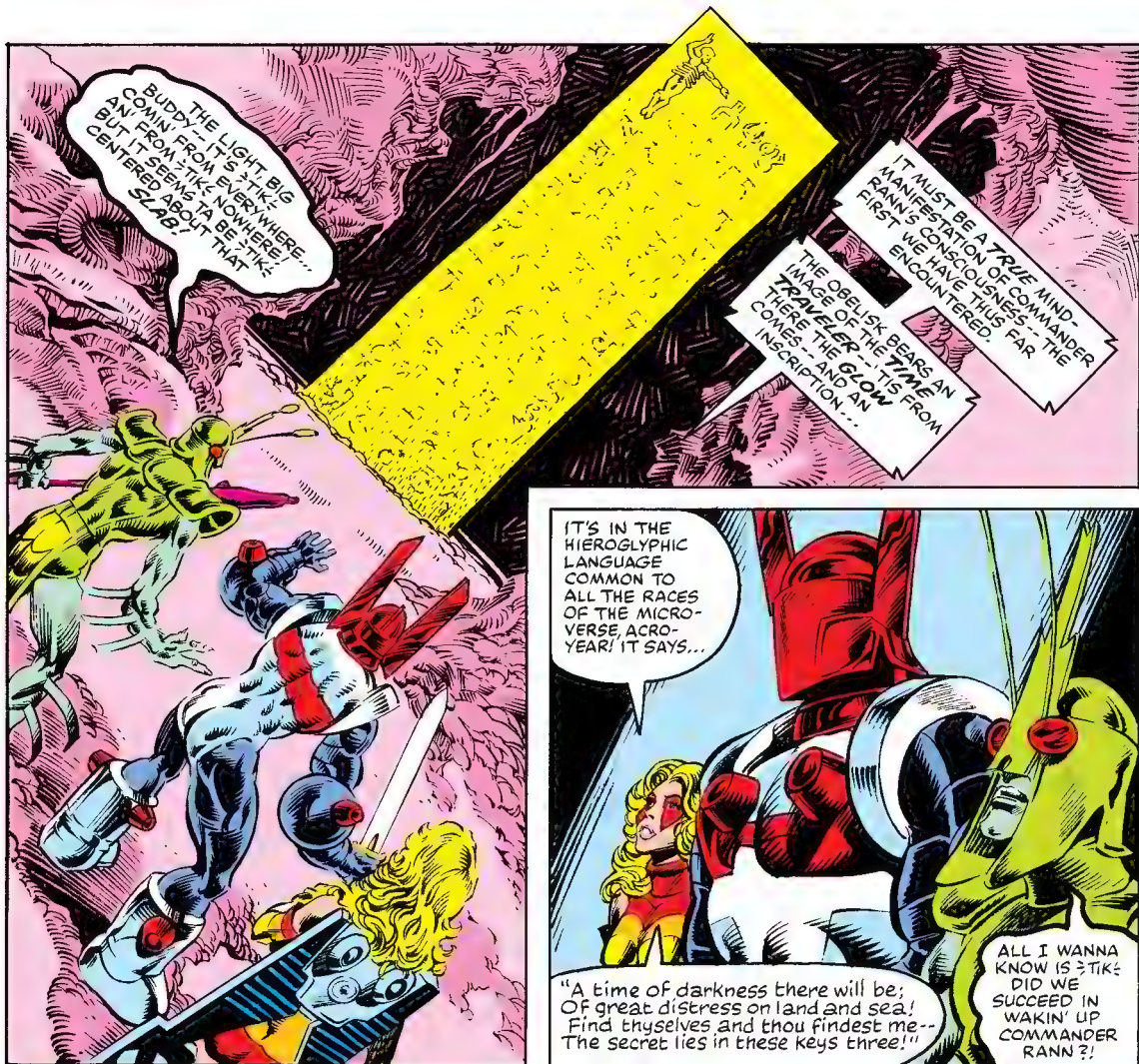
NOOO! YOU'VE PIERCED IT!!



THE TRAUMA THAT SEPARATED THE HALVES OF COMMANDER RANN'S BRAIN HAS BEEN REMOVED!

NIGHTMARE SENSES HIS FAILURE AND FLEES--

--DISPATCHED BACK INTO DARKNESS BY THE LIGHT FLOWING FROM THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE COMMANDER'S BRAIN.



BUT, WHY--?!

HE'S A CONSTRUCT, SIR-- A CREATION OF BARON KARZA, PROGRAMMED TO ACHIEVE THE BARON'S POST-HUMOUS REVENGE BY DESTROYING YOU!

HOLD HIM, MICROTRON! I'LL FIND MY LASERSONIC, AND--!

THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, COMMANDER!

PTOW!

WHAT IN SAM HILL--?!

HEEDLESS OF DANGER, NICK FURY AND DOC SAMSON RACE TO THE S.H.I.E.L.D. LIFE-SUPPORT LABORATORY!

THEY FEAR THE WORST HAS HAPPENED--

--BUT SOMETIMES TALES SUCH AS THIS HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS!

YOU CAN HOLSTER YOUR WEAPON, COL. FURY. MICROTRON'S CHEST-CANNONS TOOK CARE OF DAGON.

NOW, DR. SAMSON, IF YOU'D BE SO GOOD AS TO GET MY FELLOW-MICRONAUTS OUT OF MY MIND...?

IN LESS TIME THAN IT TAKES TO TELL, THE DEED IS DONE.

SOME HOURS LATER...

WE MUST RETURN TO THE MICROVERSE, COL. FURY. THE ENIGMA FORCE LEFT SOME KIND OF SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE IN MY MIND, WARNING OF GREAT DISASTERS TO COME.

WILL THEY MENACE OUR WORLD...OR YOURS, COMMANDER?

I DON'T KNOW, PERHAPS BOTH.

BUT I INTEND TO FIND THE THREE KEYS WHICH THE INSCRIPTION MENTIONED--

--AND LEARN THE ANSWER BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE FOR US ALL!

THERE THEY GO, WARPING THROUGH THE MOLECULAR BARRIER BETWEEN OUR UNIVERSE AND THEIRS!

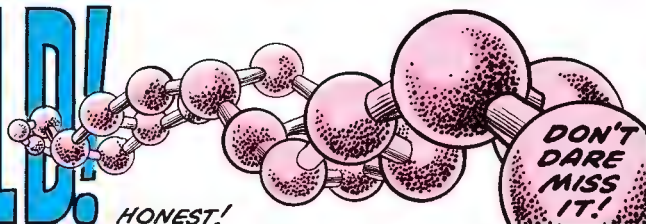
THEY WERE A GOOD BUNCH--THE BEST! BUT I GOT ME A HUNCH THAT, IF WE SEE THEIR LIKE AGAIN, IT'S GONNA SIGNAL A HOLOCAUST FOR BOTH OUR RACES.

PROPHETIC WORDS FOR A FUTURE TIME!

NEXT ISSUE YOU DEMANDED! YOU PETITIONED! YOU PLEADED! NOW YOU'VE GOT IT! THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS RETURN TO...

HOMEWORLD!

HONEST!



50c

30
JUNE
02714

MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

JUST WHEN YOU
THOUGHT IT WAS
SAFE TO GO BACK
INTO THE
MICROVERSE...

broderick



Somewhere beyond the Spacewall — a barrier in space and time — there exists a subatomic solar system called the *Microverse*! Teeming with molecular planets and a myriad of races, it has produced heroes minute in size... but mighty beyond measure!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEASON IN BAHAWALPUR IS WINDING DOWN. SOON THE RAINS WILL COME.

THE DUTCH ARCHAEOLOGIST, DR. MARTIN VANDENBURG, HAS ALMOST DESPAIRED OF EVER PROVING HIS THEORIES THAT AN ANCIENT, UNKNOWN RACE HAD ONCE INHABITED INDIA'S INDUS VALLEY.

HOPING TO CAP HIS YEARS IN INDIA WITH GLORY, HE HAS FOUND ONLY FAILURE ON THIS DIG.

EFFENDI--!

EH?

UNTIL NOW!

THERE, EFFENDI! THERE!

LEAPING FROM THE SKIDDING JEEP WITH THE AGILITY OF A MAN HALF HIS AGE, VANDENBURG STARES DOWN INTO THE OPEN PIT HERETOFORE DESIGNATED ONLY AS EXCAVATION D-51.

HIS EYES LOCK ON THE ARTIFACT RISING FROM THE SIFTED SANDS. IMMEDIATELY, HE KNOWS...

...KNOWS THAT HIS THEORIES WERE CORRECT! THAT HE HAS MADE THE FIND OF THE CENTURY! THAT HE WILL BE FAMOUS!

AND, PERHAPS, THAT EARTH'S HISTORY WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN!

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK * DANNY BULANADI * SHELLY LEFERMAN * LOUISE JONES * JIM SHOOTER
WRITER-STORYTELLERS-ARTIST INKER LETTERS EDITOR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE RACES OF THE MICROVERSE HAVE EVER FELT THEIR FATE TO BE LINKED TO THE AWESOME POWER KNOWN AS THE ENIGMA FORCE. IT GUIDED THEM AND PROTECTED THEM THROUGH THE TIME TRAVELERS, THE MIND-MANIFESTED BEINGS CONCEIVED IN THE BRAIN OF COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN. NOW THE TIME TRAVELERS ARE GONE-- NO LINK TO THE ENIGMA FORCE REMAINS. TO DISCOVER WHAT THIS PORTENDS FOR THE MICRONAUTS, OUR HEROES HAVE RETURNED TO...

COMMANDER RANN

MARIONETTE

BUG

MICROTRON

ACROYEAR

THE MICRONAUTS

HOME *sweet* HOMEWORLD!

IN THE ROYAL PALACE-- ON THE MOLECULAR PLANET HOMEWORLD'S FIRST ZONE-- KING ARGON, HIS QUEEN-TO-BE SLUG, PRINCE PHAROID, AND THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS GATHER 'ROUND AS COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN ILLUSTRATES WITH LASER PEN ON COMPUTER SCREEN...

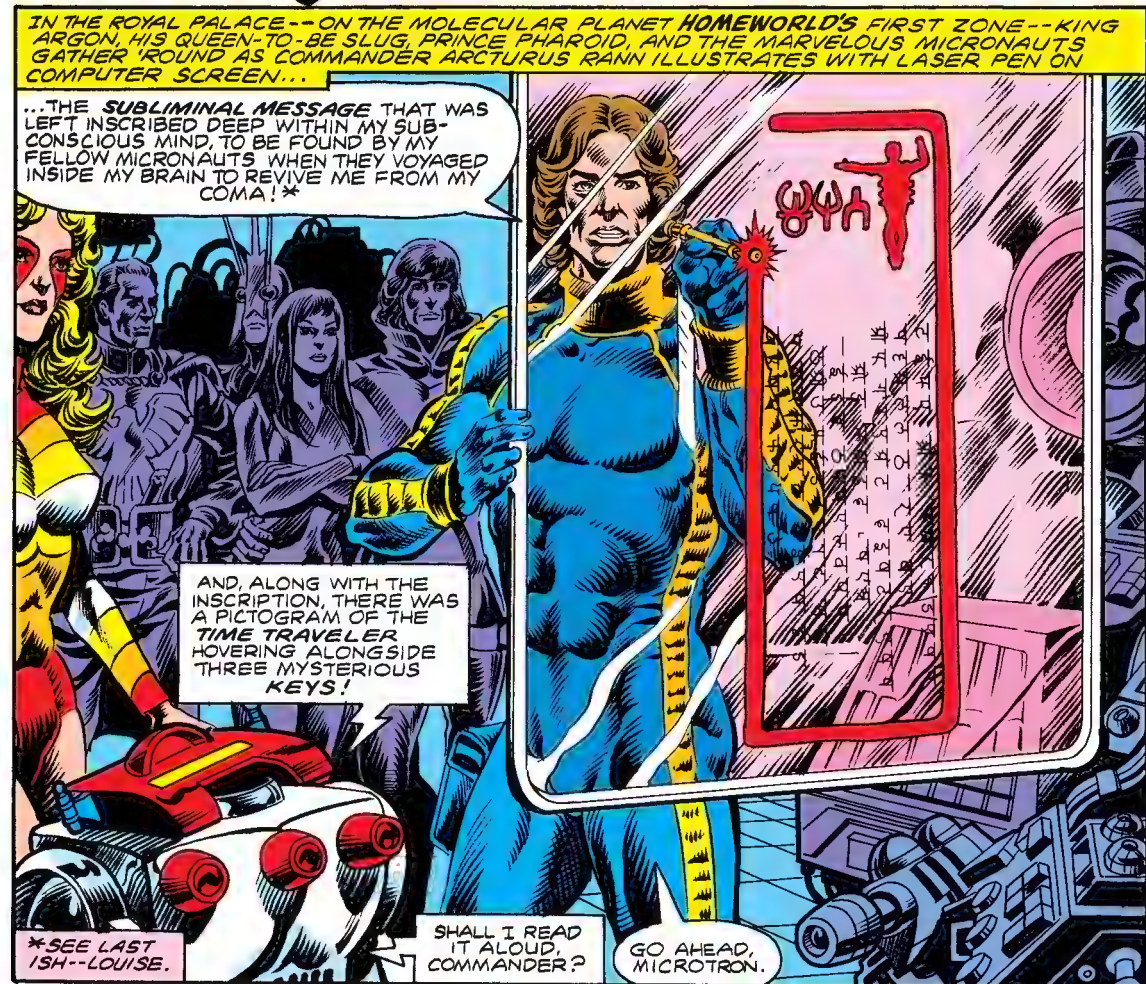
...THE **SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE** THAT WAS LEFT INSCRIBED DEEP WITHIN MY SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND, TO BE FOUND BY MY FELLOW MICRONAUTS WHEN THEY VOYAGED INSIDE MY BRAIN TO REVIVE ME FROM MY COMA! *

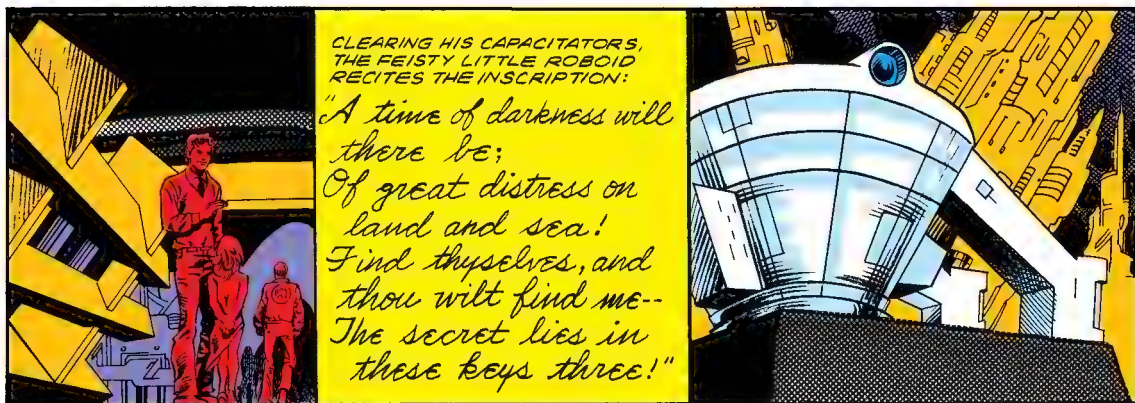
AND, ALONG WITH THE INSCRIPTION, THERE WAS A PICTOGRAM OF THE **TIME TRAVELER** HOVERING ALONGSIDE THREE MYSTERIOUS **KEYS!**

*SEE LAST /SH--LOUISE.

SHALL I READ IT ALOUD, COMMANDER?

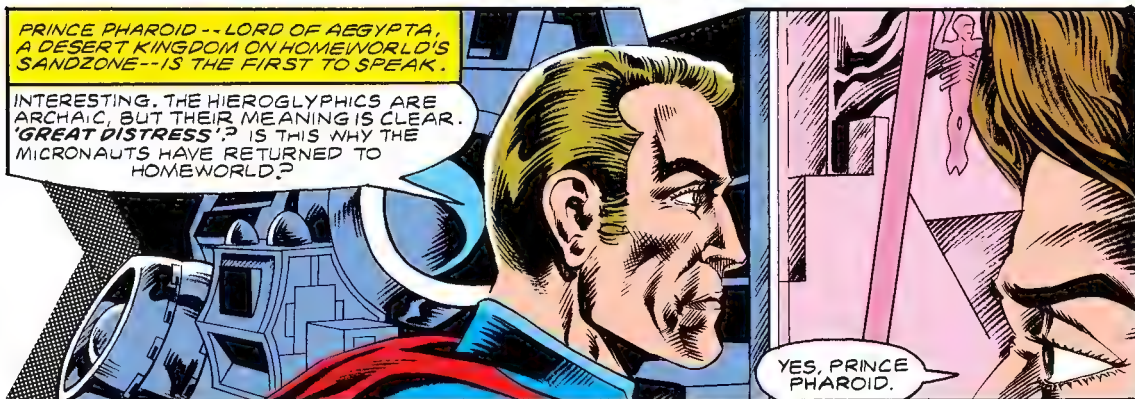
GO AHEAD, MICROTRON.





CLEARING HIS CAPACITATORS,
THE FEISTY LITTLE ROBOD
RECITES THE INSCRIPTION:

*"A time of darkness will
there be;
Of great distress on
land and sea!
Find thyself, and
thou wilt find me--
The secret lies in
these keys three!"*



PRINCE PHAROID -- LORD OF AEGYPTA,
A DESERT KINGDOM ON HOMEWORLD'S
SANDZONE--IS THE FIRST TO SPEAK.

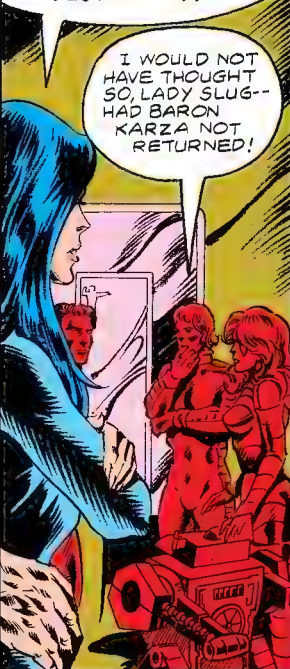
INTERESTING. THE HIEROGLYPHS ARE
ARCHAIC, BUT THEIR MEANING IS CLEAR.
'GREAT DISTRESS'. IS THIS WHY THE
MICRONAUTS HAVE RETURNED TO
HOMEWORLD?

YES, PRINCE
PHAROID.

I BELIEVE THE INSCRIPTION TO BE
A FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE
TIME TRAVELERS -- A WARNING, IF
YOU WILL -- THAT DANGER CONFRONTS
THE MICROVERSE SHOULD THEY
EVER BE DESTROYED.

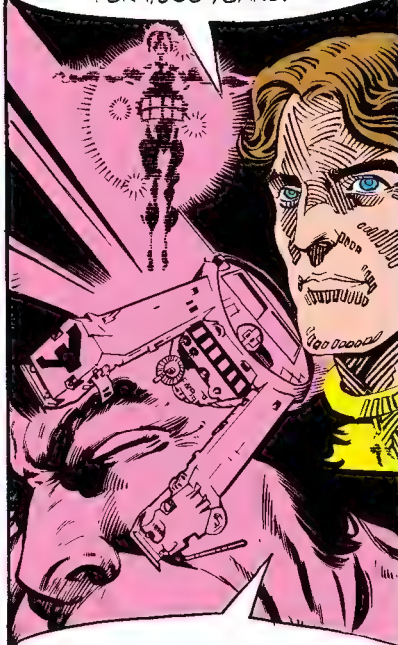


BUT THE TIME
TRAVELERS ARE
EMMISSARIES OF THE
ENIGMA FORCE -- THE
UNIVERSAL POWER THAT
BINDS THE VERY MOLECULES
OF OUR MICROVERSE TO-
GETHER! CAN THEY BE
DESTROYED?!

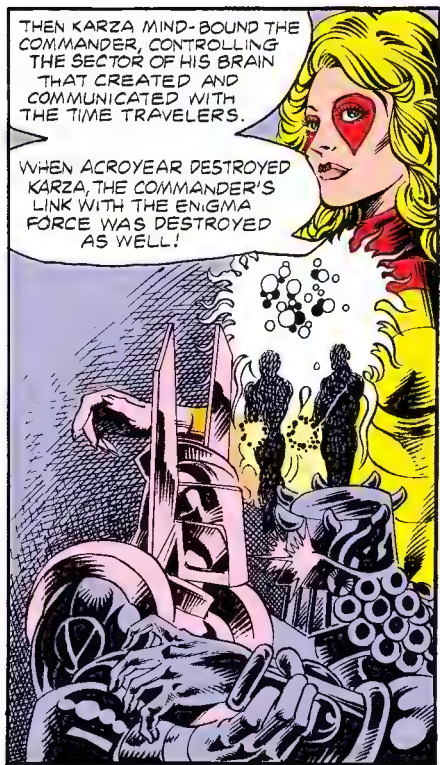


I WOULD NOT
HAVE THOUGHT
SO, LADY SLUG--
HAD BARON
KARZA NOT
RETURNED!

YOU SEE, THE ENIGMA FORCE HAD
CREATED THE TIME TRAVELERS
AS ENERGY ENTITIES BASED ON
MY BRAIN PATTERNS AS I
VOYAGED IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION
FOR 1,000 YEARS.

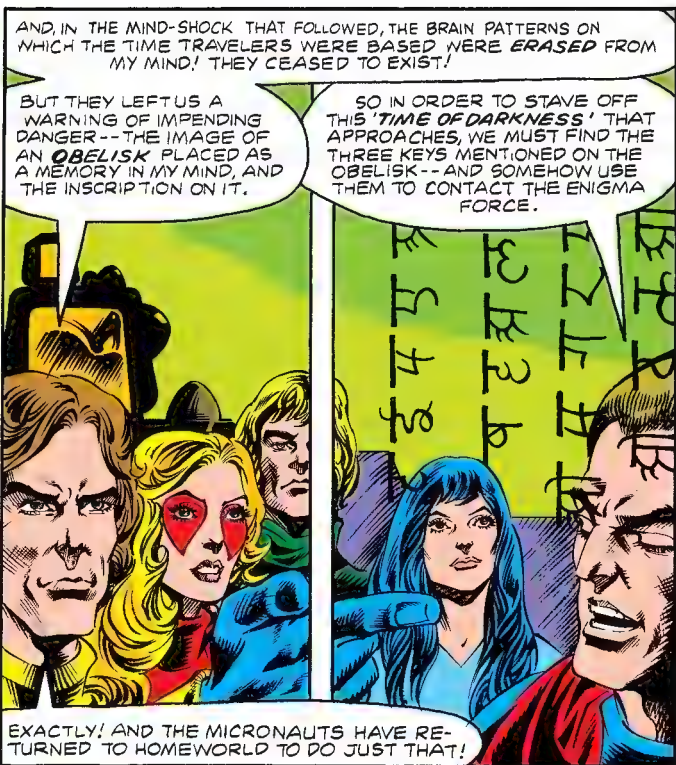


I BELIEVE THEIR PURPOSE WAS TO
WATCH OVER US, TO PROTECT US, IF THEY
COULD, AGAINST THAT WHICH WOULD
DESTROY US



THEN KARZA MIND-BOUND THE COMMANDER, CONTROLLING THE SECTOR OF HIS BRAIN THAT CREATED AND COMMUNICATED WITH THE TIME TRAVELERS.

WHEN ACROYEAR DESTROYED KARZA, THE COMMANDER'S LINK WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE WAS DESTROYED AS WELL!



AND, IN THE MIND-SHOCK THAT FOLLOWED, THE BRAIN PATTERNS ON WHICH THE TIME TRAVELERS WERE BASED WERE *ERASED* FROM MY MIND! THEY CEASED TO EXIST!

BUT THEY LEFT US A WARNING OF IMPENDING DANGER--THE IMAGE OF AN *OBELISK* PLACED AS A MEMORY IN MY MIND, AND THE INSCRIPTION ON IT.

SO IN ORDER TO STAVE OFF THIS '*TIME OF DARKNESS*' THAT APPROACHES, WE MUST FIND THE THREE KEYS MENTIONED ON THE OBELISK--AND SOMEHOW USE THEM TO CONTACT THE ENIGMA FORCE.

EXACTLY! AND THE MICRONAUTS HAVE RETURNED TO HOMEWORLD TO DO JUST THAT!

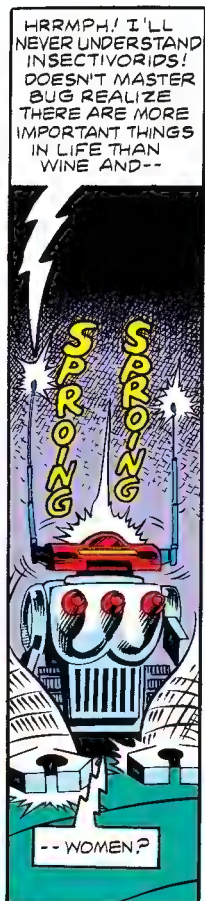


OH, THERE WERE *OTHER* $\int$ TIKE $\int$ INDUCEMENTS, COMMANDER--SUCH AS UNPROCESSED SNAIL-LOAF AN' $\int$ TIKE $\int$ LADIES MY OWN SIZE!

MASTER BUG, THE FATE OF HOMEWORLD--PERHAPS THE ENTIRE MICROVERSE --IS AT STAKE!

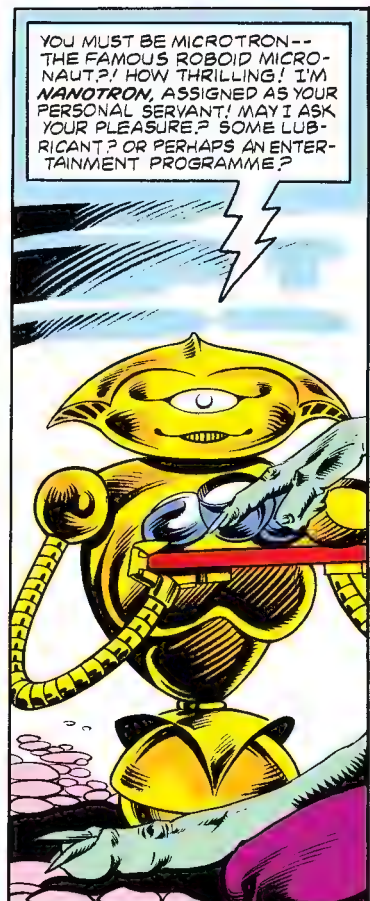
HOW CAN YOU BE SO...SO HEDONISTIC?!

EASY $\int$ TIKE $\int$ MUNCHKIN--I $\int$ TIKE $\int$ PRACTICE!



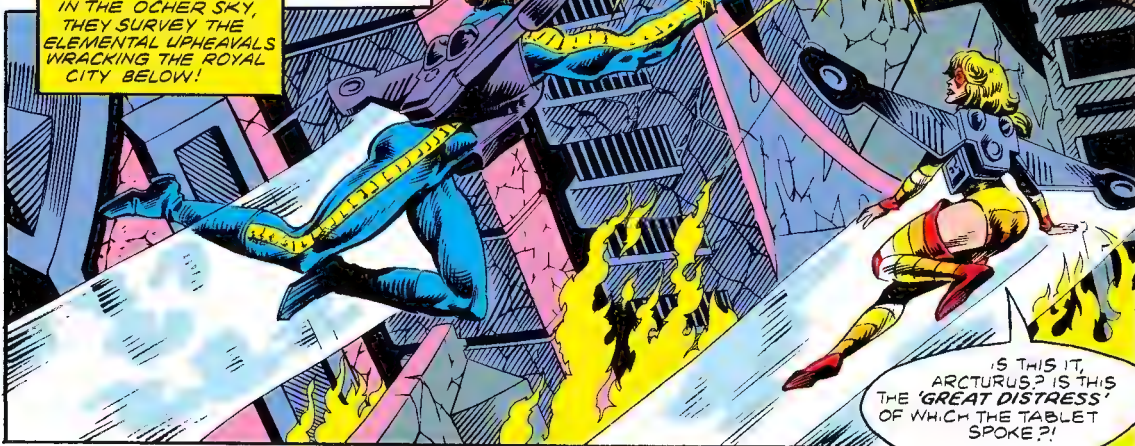
HRMPH! I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND INSECTIVORIDS! DOESN'T MASTER BUG REALIZE THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE THAN WINE AND--

--WOMEN?



YOU MUST BE MICROTRON--THE FAMOUS ROBOID MICRO-NAUT? HOW THRILLING! I'M *NANOTRON*, ASSIGNED AS YOUR PERSONAL SERVANT! MAY I ASK YOUR PLEASURE? SOME LUBRICANT? OR PERHAPS AN ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME?

HOWEVER, BEFORE THE ENRAPPED MICROTRON CAN REGAIN CONTROL OVER HIS LOVE-SMITTEN CIRCUITS, HE IS SWEEPED OFF HIS TREADS AS THE ROYAL PALACE IS ROCKED BY A SUDDEN...





ARCTURUS RANN'S SILENCE SERVES ONLY TO CONFIRM MARIONETTE'S FEARS AS SHE STARES HORROR-STROCK AT THE DESTRUCTION BELOW!



MY CITY! MY PEOPLE! DALLAN AND SEPSIS, SAVE US--!

THE GUAKE'S OVER, MARI...FOR NOW.



BUT I'M AFRAID THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING-- A PRECURSOR OF GRAVER THINGS TO COME.

GRIM-FACED AND GRIEVING, RANN AND MARI RETURN TO THE ROYAL PALACE.



THERE, KING ARGON-- MARIONETTE'S BROTHER--MAKES A FATEFUL PRO- NOUNCEMENT...

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT-- THE 'GREAT DISTRESS' HAS BEGUN! UNLESS WE CAN REESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE, THE MICROVERSE MAY WELL BE DOOMED!



COMMANDER RANN, I WILL SEND MESSENGERS AT ONCE TO EVERY CORNER OF MY KINGDOM--

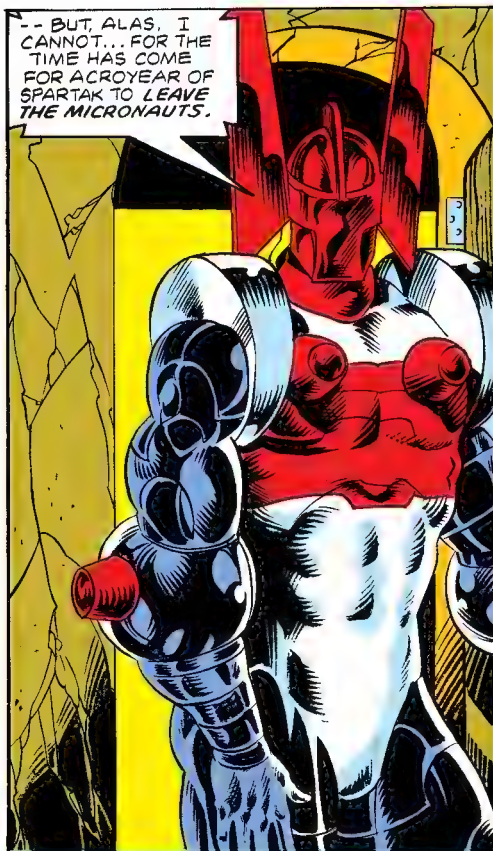
-- WITH ORDERS THAT A SEARCH FOR THE **THREE KEYS** OF WHICH THE TABLET SPOKE BE INITIATED!



I WILL ALSO ISSUE AN EDICT THAT YOU AND YOUR MICRO-NAUTS BE COOPERATED WITH AT EVERY STAGE OF YOUR QUEST!

THANK YOU, ARGON. WE'LL GET STARTED AT ONCE.

I WISH I COULD SHARE THIS DANGER WITH YOU, MY COMRADES--



-- BUT, ALAS, I CANNOT... FOR THE TIME HAS COME FOR ACROYEAR TO LEAVE THE MICRONAUTS.

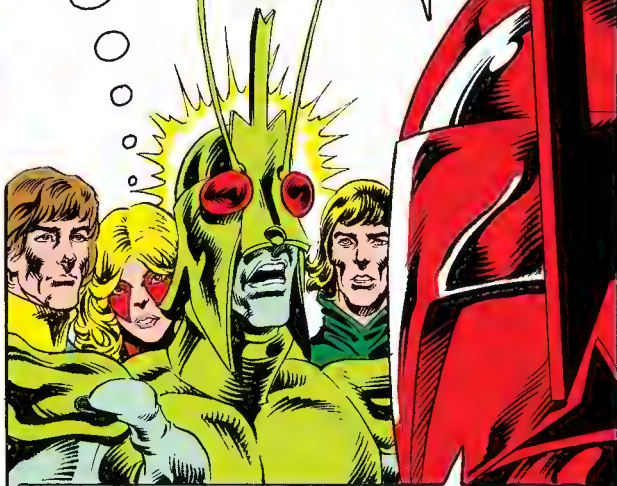
BUT ?TIKÉ WHY, BIG BUDDY ?! WHY, WHEN WE NEED YA ?TIKÉ NOW MORE THAN EVER ??!

ACROYEAR'S LEFT HIS MASK ON! HE'S SHUTTING US OUT, REFUSING TO MEET OUR EYES LEST THEY PENETRATE TO HIS HEART!

YOU ADD TO THE GRIEF WHICH ACCOMPANIES MY DECISION, LITTLE ONE-- BUT THE MICRONAUTS HAVE TAUGHT ME WHAT IT MEANS TO OBEY THE DICTATES OF ONE'S HEART, AND THAT IS WHAT I MUST NOW DO.

I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF MY WORLD, BUG, EVEN THOUGH THE WORLDMIND-- THE LIFE-FORCE OF MY PLANET, SPARTAK-- DESIRED ITS OWN DESTRUCTION...

THOUGH VOICED AS EMOTIONLESSLY AS POSSIBLY, ACROYEAR'S ANNOUNCEMENT RINGS THROUGH THE CHAMBER LIKE A THUNDERCLAP.



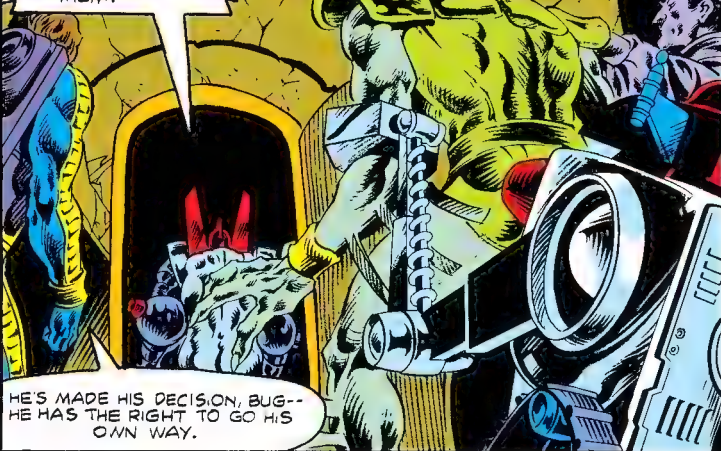
...FOR IT KNEW, AS I DID, THAT ITS FULL FORCE HAD TO BE HURLED AGAINST BARON KARZA TO ENSURE HIS DEFEAT. BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER REASON...

THE WORLDMIND REGRETTED WHAT IT HAD MADE OF MY ONCE PEACEFUL PEOPLE-- THAT HARDENED BY LIFE ON SPARTAK'S COLD, STONE SURFACE, THEY HAD BECOME WARLIKE AND CRUEL.

IT HOPED THAT-- WHILE SEARCHING THE STARS FOR A NEW HOME-- THEY WOULD FIND IN THEMSELVES SOME TRACE OF THEIR LONG LOST HUMANITY.

ALTHOUGH THEY NOW BELIEVE THAT I BETRAYED THEM-- THEY ARE STILL MY PEOPLE, AND MY FIRST DUTY IS TO THEM!

ACROYEAR!
?TIKÉ COME BACK!

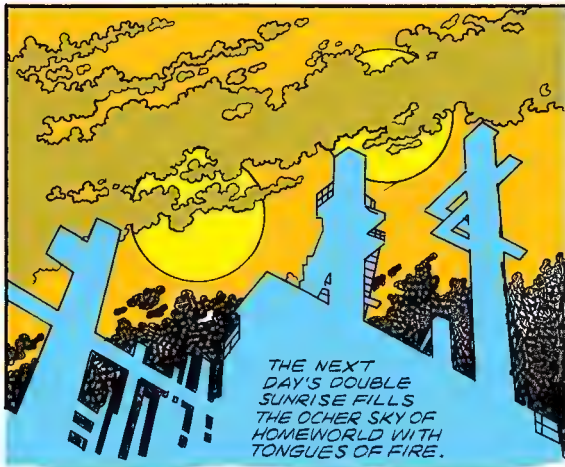


HE'S MADE HIS DECISION, BUG-- HE HAS THE RIGHT TO GO HIS OWN WAY.

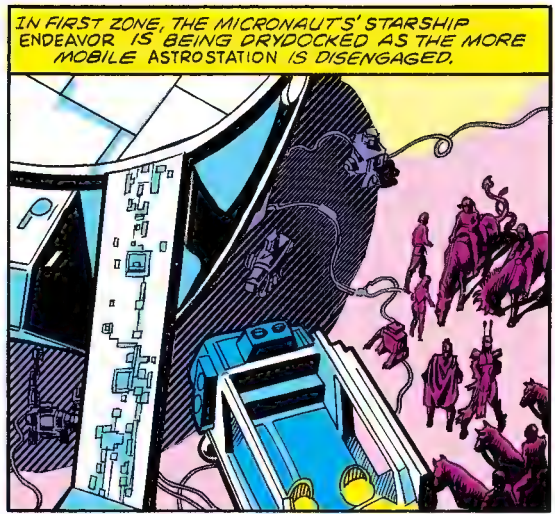


YEAH! AN' I GOT A ?TIKÉ RIGHT TA CRY OVER THE LOSS OF A ?TIKÉ FRIEND!

WATER IS THE ONE ELEMENT INSECTNORIDS HATE-- AND YET IN BUG'S TEARS LIES AN INDICATOR OF THE GREATNESS OF HIS HEART.



THE NEXT DAY'S DOUBLE SUNRISE FILLS THE OTHER SKY OF HOMEWORLD WITH TONGUES OF FIRE.



IN FIRST ZONE, THE MICRONAUTS' STARSHIP ENDEAVOR IS BEING DRYDOCKED AS THE MORE MOBILE ASTROSTATION IS DISENGAGED.

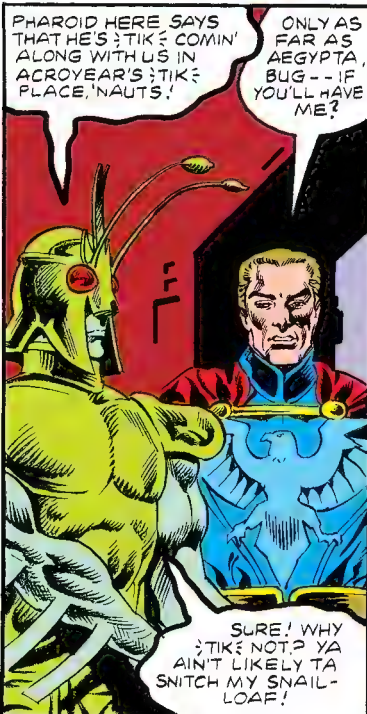


WE'LL RELAY BACK ANY INFORMATION WE ACQUIRE, ARGON.

OUR SCIENTISTS WILL ATTEMPT TO PINPOINT THE ORIGIN OF THE PLANETQUAKE. PERHAPS THAT WILL PROVIDE A CLUE.

OBERON! I THOUGHT ARGON'S STEED HAD DIED WHEN HE AND HIS MASTER WERE GENETICALLY ENGINEERED INTO ONE BEING IN KARZA'S BODY BANKS!

WITH KARZA'S DEATH, BOTH MASTER AND HORSE REVERTED TO NORMAL, MARI.



PHAROID HERE SAYS THAT HE'S 'TIK COMIN' ALONG WITH US IN ACROYEAR'S 'TIK PLACE, 'NAUTS!

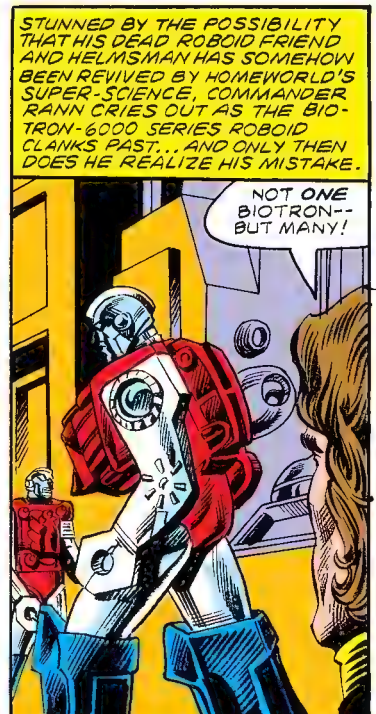
ONLY AS FAR AS AEGYPTA, BUG -- IF YOU'LL HAVE ME?

SURE! WHY 'TIK NOT? YA AIN'T LIKELY TA SNITCH MY SNAIL-LOAF!



ALL RIGHT, MICRO-NAUTS -- THE ASTROSTATION'S READY! IT'S TIME WE GOT UNDER--

--WAY? BIOTRON!



STUNNED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT HIS DEAD ROBOID FRIEND AND HELMSMAN HAS SOMEHOW BEEN REVIVED BY HOMEWORLD'S SUPER-SCIENCE, COMMANDER RANN CRIES OUT AS THE BIOTRON-6000 SERIES ROBOID CLANKS PAST... AND ONLY THEN DOES HE REALIZE HIS MISTAKE.

NOT ONE BIOTRON-- BUT MANY!



AND NONE OF THEM...THE RIGHT ONE.

SURE! WHAT'D YA ;TIK; THINK, COMMANDER?



THEM ;TIK; OTHER BIOTRON'S WERE MANUFACTURED HERE ON HOME-WORLD--

--WHILE YOU WAS ;TIK; VOYAGIN' THROUGH THE MICROVERSE FOR ALL THEM YEARS! THEY'RE ;TIK; OBSOLETE NOW, BUT STILL IN SERVICE!

OF COURSE, BUG. I--I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED...



I'M READY! NOTHING HOLDS US HERE ON FIRST ZONE, MICRO-NAUTS--AND A **WORLD** WAITS TO BE SAVED. LET US GET ON WITH OUR MISSION!

LET THE QUEST FOR THE ENIGMA FORCE BEGIN!

SOON, THE ASTROSTATION SKIMS OVER THE AZURE WAVES OF OCEANIA...

SEAZONE'S ONLY 2 XATS AWAY, ARCTURUS.

CAN'T WE ;TIK; GET THERE ANY FASTER, PRINCESS? I THINK I'M GETTIN' SEA ;TIK; SICK!

AMAZING! THERE IS AS MUCH WATER ON **THIS** MOLECULE OF HOMEWORLD AS THERE IS **SAND** IN MY REALM OF AEGYPTA!

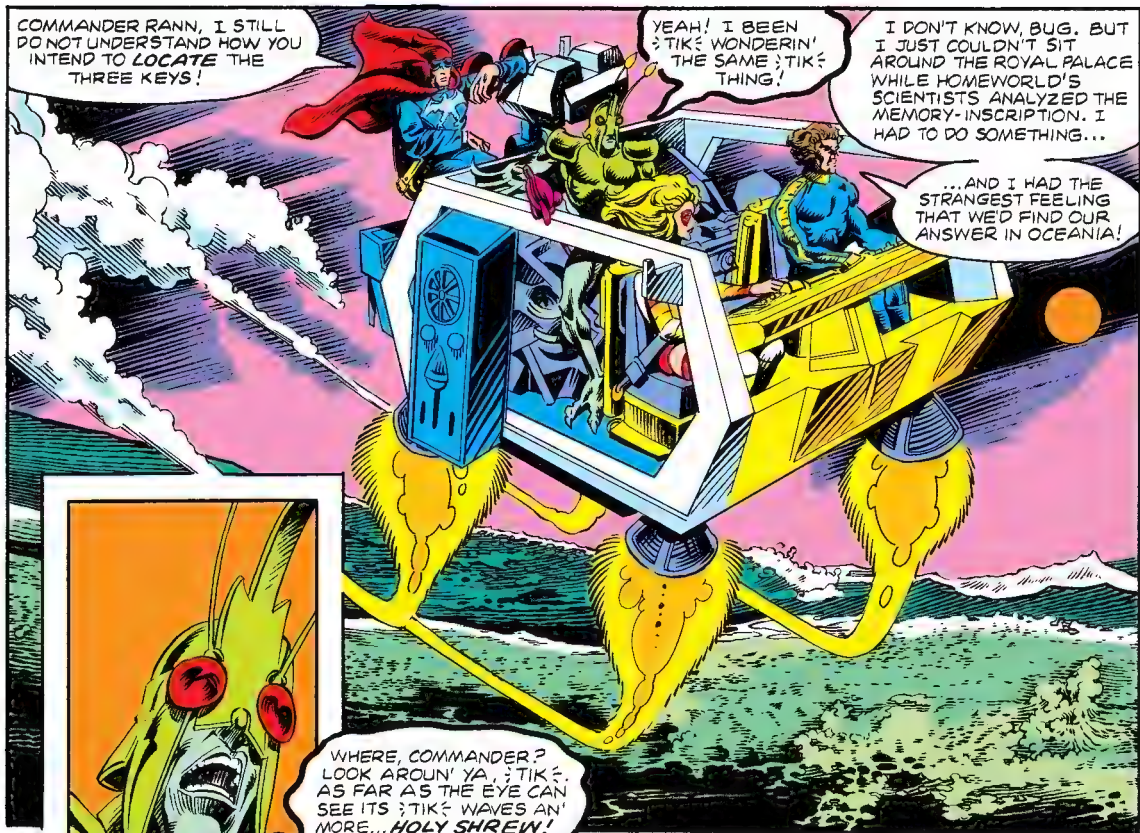


COMMANDER RANN, I STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW YOU INTEND TO LOCATE THE THREE KEYS!

YEAH! I BEEN ;TIK; WONDERIN' THE SAME ;TIK; THING!

I DON'T KNOW, BUG, BUT I JUST COULDN'T SIT AROUND THE ROYAL PALACE WHILE HOMEWORLD'S SCIENTISTS ANALYZED THE MEMORY-INSRIPTION. I HAD TO DO SOMETHING...

...AND I HAD THE STRANGEST FEELING THAT WE'D FIND OUR ANSWER IN OCEANIA!



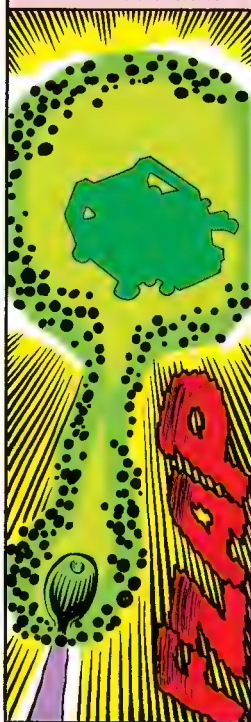
WHERE, COMMANDER? LOOK AROUND' YA, ;TIK;. AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE ITS ;TIK; WAVES AN' MORE... HOLY SHREW!

LEVIATHAN!



IF BUG RECOGNIZES THE MONSTROUS FISH, IT'S ONLY BECAUSE ITS IMAGE, APPEARING IN EVERY BESTIARY, HAS FRIGHTENED THE MICROVERSE'S SCHOOL CHILDREN FOR GENERATIONS!

IT IS ARMOR-PLATED, THIS LEVIATHAN! HUGE BEYOND MEASURE! AND FROM ITS SKULL PROTRUDES A GLOWING POWER-HORN...



...CAPABLE OF SIPHONING ENERGY FROM ANY POWER-SOURCE IN ITS VICINITY!



ITS SOLAR BATTERIES SUDDENLY DRAINED, THE ASTROSTATION FALLS!

BIOTRON, STATUS REPORT!

BIOTRON'S DEAD, COMMANDER--REMEMBER? BUT I CAN TELL YOU THAT WE'VE LOST OUR SOLAR DRIVE! WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE STILL FUNCTIONING, UNTIL THE CREATURE'S NEXT ATTACK--

--AND OUR INFLATABLE PONTOONS WILL KEEP US AFLOAT ...UNLESS, OF COURSE, LEVIATHAN DECIDES TO RAM US!

YA COULD HAVE LEFT OUT THAT 3TIK 3 LAST PART, MUNCHKIN! WE CAN 3TIK 3 SEE THE FISH SWIMMIN' AT US AGAIN!

THORIUM BURSTS DON'T EVEN PENETRATE ITS ARMORED HIDE!

KEEP FIRING, PHAROID! WE CAN'T LET OUR QUEST BE ENDED BEFORE IT'S BEGUN!

WREET
WREET

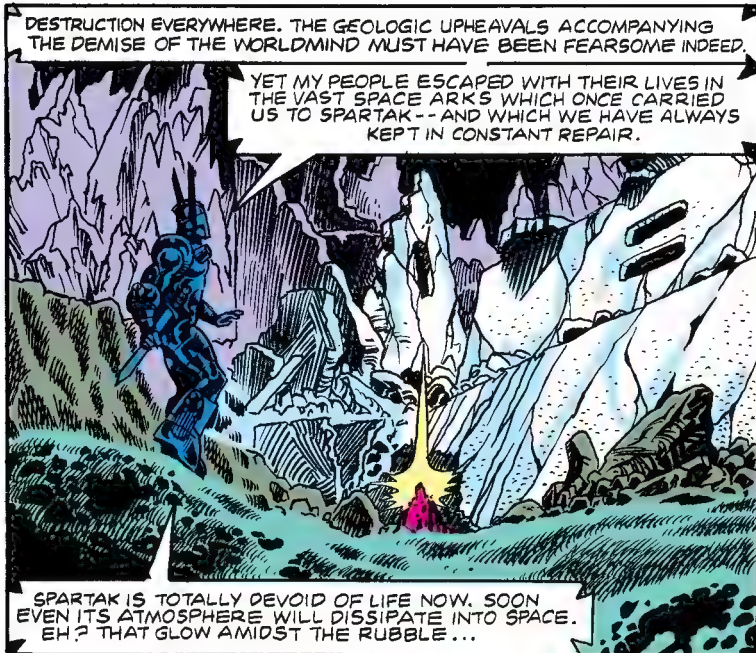
THE MICRONAUTS SHOW NO FEAR IN THE FACE OF THE MAMMOTH CETACEAN BUT, AS LEVIATHAN CIRCLES EVER CLOSER, THEY GROW CONCERNED FOR THEIR MICROVERSE...

...FOR WHO WILL SAVE IT IF THEY PERISH BENEATH THE WHALE-TOSSED WAVES?!

MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE MICROVERSE, A SOLD CRAFT DRAWS NIGH SPARTAK.

EVEN FROM SPACE, THE PILOT COULD SEE WHAT HE ALREADY KNEW IN HIS HEART... HIS WORLD IS DEAD-- HIS PEOPLE FLED TO THE STARS!

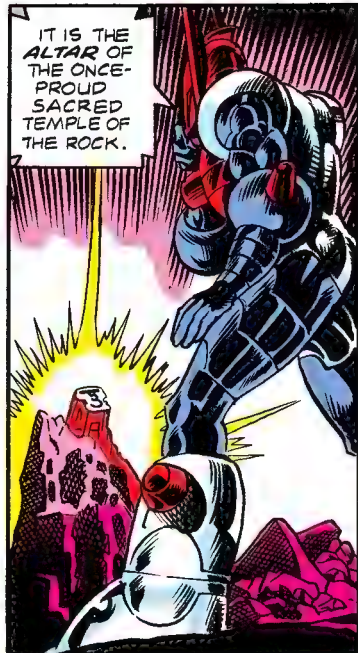
IT IS HE WHO BROUGHT THIS ABOUT! HE--ACROYEAR!



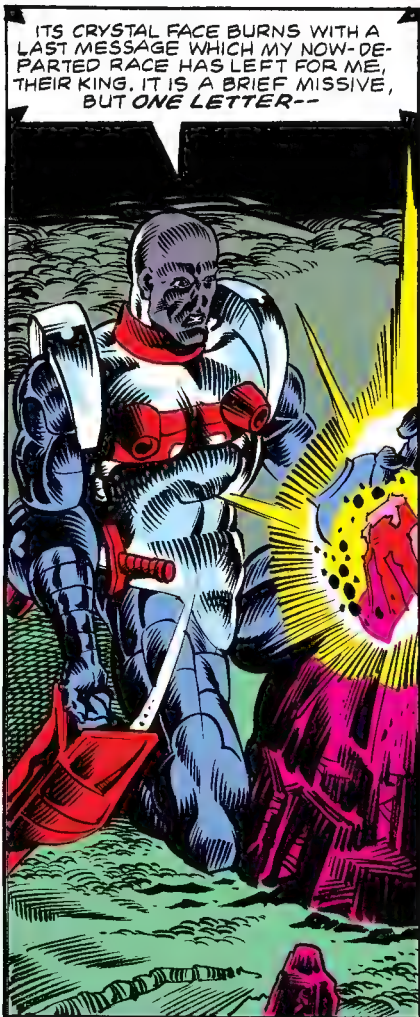
DESTRUCTION EVERYWHERE. THE GEOLOGIC UPEAVALS ACCOMPANYING THE DEMISE OF THE WORLDMIND MUST HAVE BEEN FEARSOME INDEED.

YET MY PEOPLE ESCAPED WITH THEIR LIVES IN THE VAST SPACE ARKS WHICH ONCE CARRIED US TO SPARTAK--AND WHICH WE HAVE ALWAYS KEPT IN CONSTANT REPAIR.

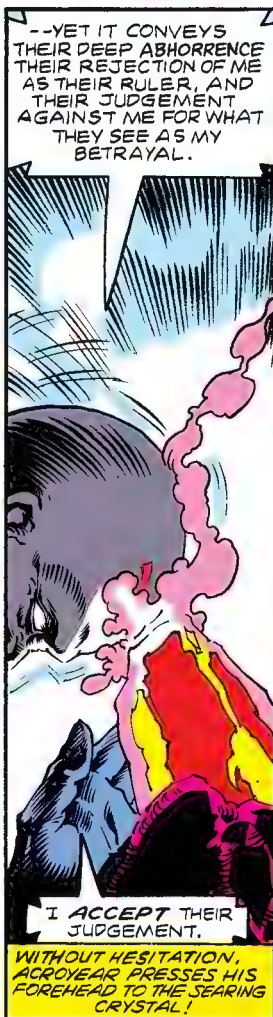
SPARTAK IS TOTALLY DEVOID OF LIFE NOW. SOON EVEN ITS ATMOSPHERE WILL DISSIPATE INTO SPACE. EH? THAT GLOW AMIDST THE RUBBLE...



IT IS THE ALTAR OF THE ONCE-PROUD SACRED TEMPLE OF THE ROCK.



ITS CRYSTAL FACE BURNS WITH A LAST MESSAGE WHICH MY NOW-DEPARTED RACE HAS LEFT FOR ME, THEIR KING. IT IS A BRIEF MISSIVE, BUT **ONE LETTER**--



--YET IT CONVEYS THEIR DEEP ABHORRENCE THEIR REJECTION OF ME AS THEIR RULER, AND THEIR JUDGEMENT AGAINST ME FOR WHAT THEY SEE AS MY BETRAYAL.

I **ACCEPT** THEIR JUDGEMENT.

WITHOUT HESITATION, ACROYEAR PRESSES HIS FOREHEAD TO THE SEARING CRYSTAL!



AS THE CRYSTAL'S LIGHT FLUTTERS, DIMS, AND GOES OUT, ACROYEAR RAISES HIS FACE TO THE HEAVENS -- TO REVEAL THE SCARLET SYMBOL EMBLAZONED UPON HIS EBONY FEATURES!

HEAR ME, MY PEOPLE: I WILL WEAR YOUR BRAND, YOUR "I" FOR **TRAITOR**--

--UNTIL I FIND YOU IN YOUR WANDERINGS AMONGST THE STARS... AND PROVE TO YOU THAT I ACTED AS A KING **MUST** ACT TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE, IF NOT HIS WORLD.

THE SILENT STARS MAKE NO RESPONSE!

MEANWHILE, ON OCEANIA, HOMEWORLD'S FOURTH MOLECULE...

THE THORIUM CANNON IS LOSING ITS CHARGE!

PWOOM

PWOOM

IT'S THAT 3TIK FISH! HE'S DRAININ' OUR 3TIK WEAPONS SYSTEMS OF THEIR POWER!

MASTER BUG, I FEEL I MUST CORRECT WHAT IS APPARENTLY A MISCONCEPTION. LEVIATHAN IS NOT, PRECISELY SPEAKING, A FISH--BUT A MAMMAL...

MICROTON!

I KNOW, COMMANDER-- YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME TO SHUT UP!

NO... TO STOP FIRING AND LET MARIONETTE AND ME TRY TO DRAW THE WHALE AWAY!

ARCTURUS, FLY FASTER! IT'S ALMOST UPON US.

PRINCESS! COMMANDER!

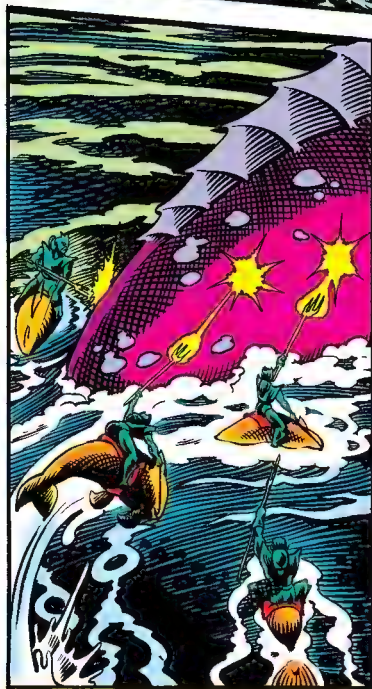
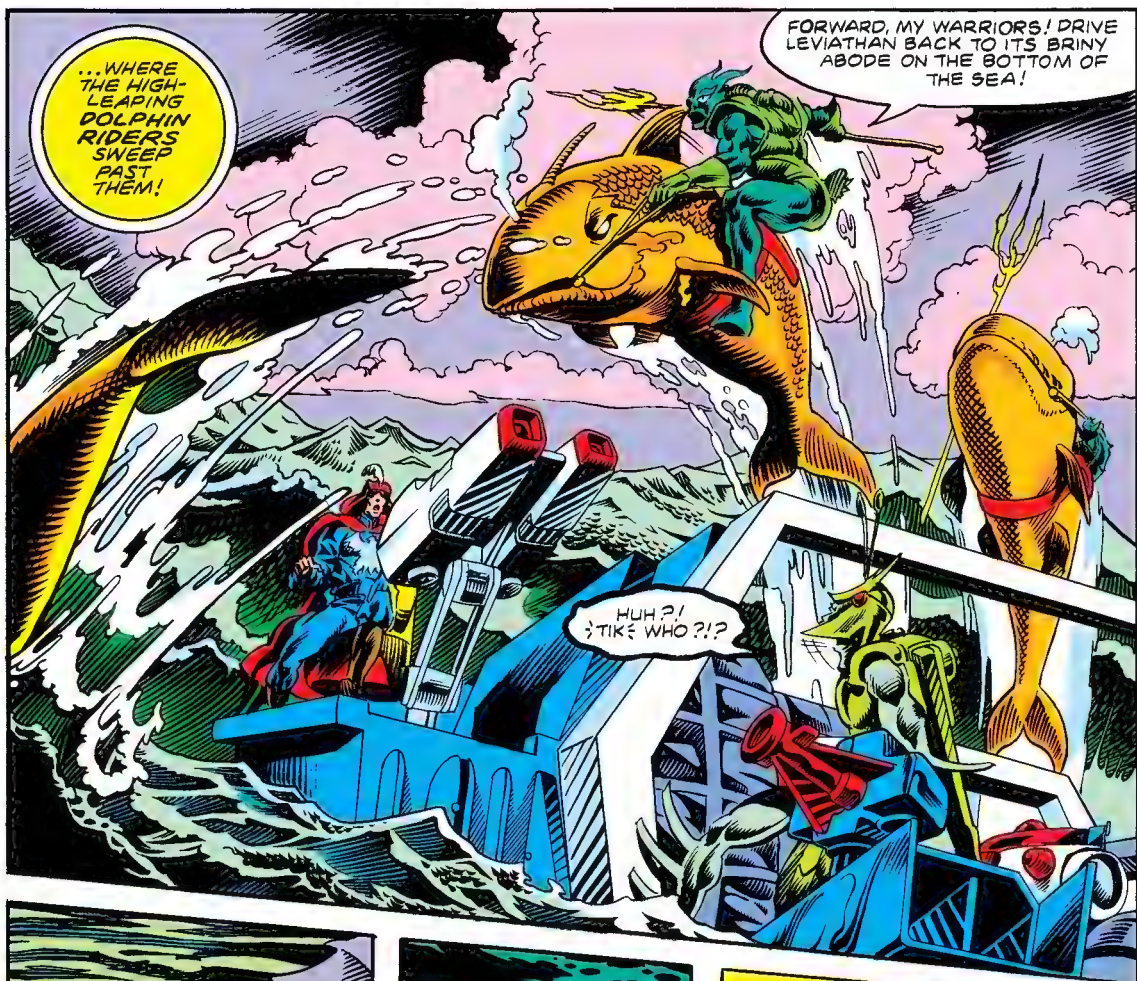
PWOOM

IT 3TIK SWALLOWED 'EM! THEY'RE 3TIK GONE!

3TIK GLUB!

I GOTTA 3BLECH GET ON A GLIDER-WING--GO 3TIK AFTER 'EM--TRY AN' 3TIK SAVE 'EM!

NUMB WITH GRIEF, THE MICRONAUTS FAIL TO LOOK TO THEIR REAR...

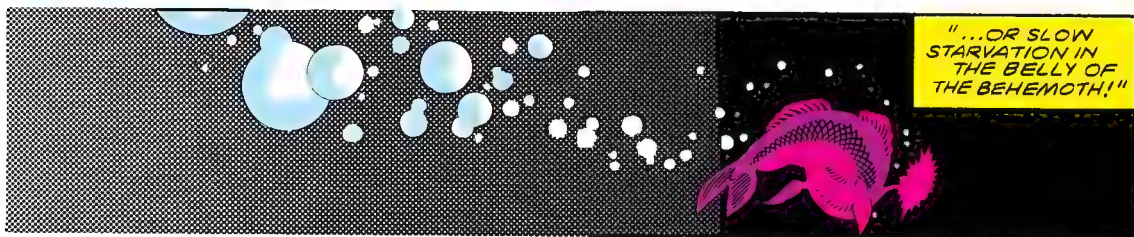
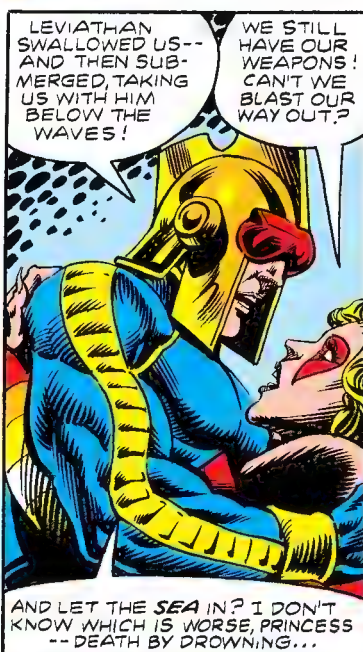
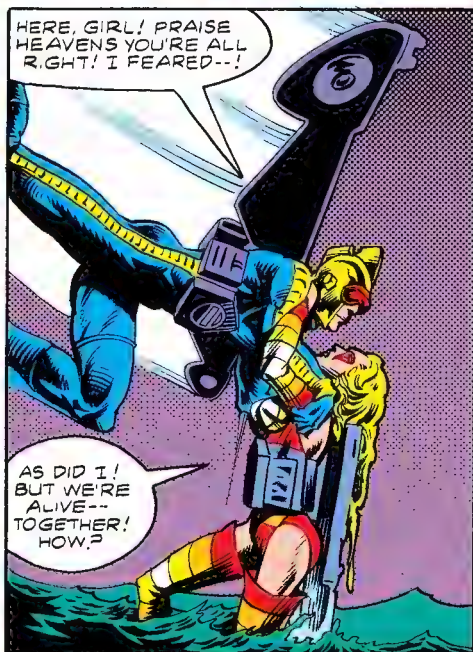
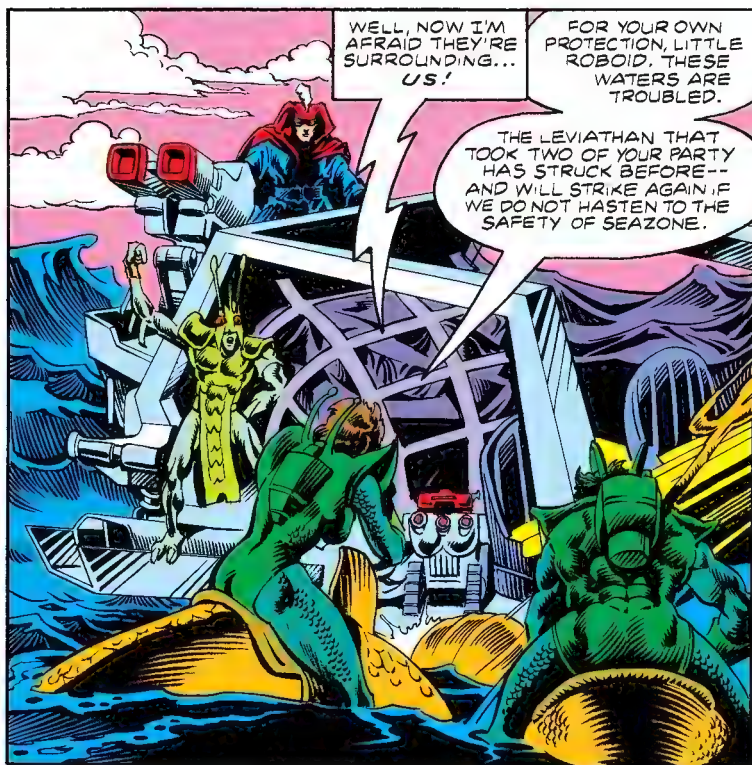


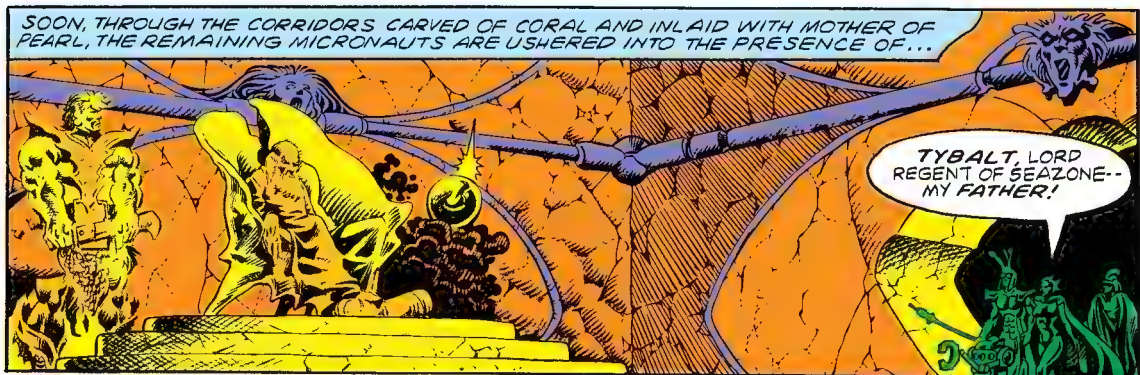
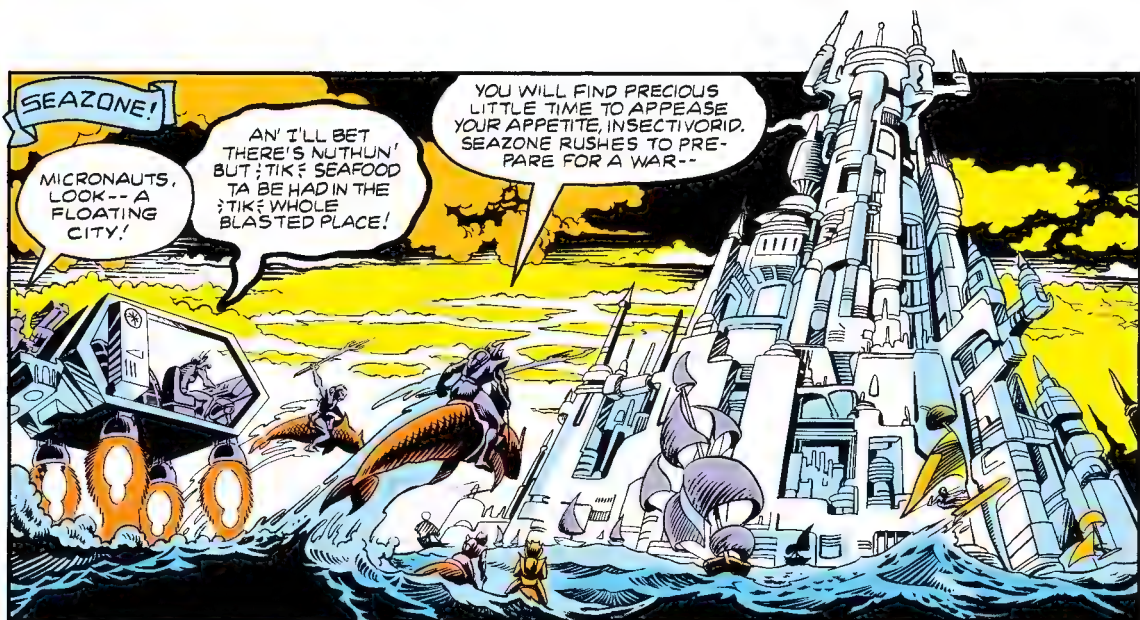
SWIFTLY ENCIRCLING THE COLOSSAL CETACEAN, THE SMALL SQUADRON OF DOLPHIN-RIDING WARRIORS PROD THE WHALE WITH THEIR POWER-CHARGED TRIDENTS!



RIPPED WITH PAIN, LEVIATHAN ESCAPES BY DIVING BENEATH THE WAVES...







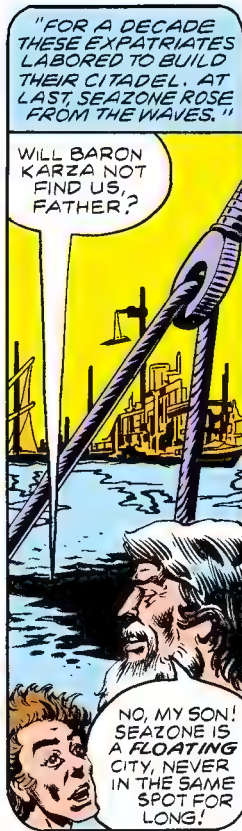




THREE DECADES AGO, WHEN I WAS BUT AN INFANT, MY FATHER SOUGHT TO ESCAPE THE TYRANNY OF BARON KARZA BY CROSSING THE MOLECULAR BRIDGE FROM FIRST ZONE TO OCEANIA.

HE TOOK WITH HIM MY MOTHER, MY OLDER BROTHER AND ME.

FLEET WERE HIS SHIPS AND LOYAL HIS WARRIORS.



"FOR A DECADE THESE EXPATRIATES LABORED TO BUILD THEIR CITADEL. AT LAST, SEAZONE ROSE FROM THE WAVES."

WILL BARON KARZA NOT FIND US, FATHER?

NO, MY SON! SEAZONE IS A FLOATING CITY, NEVER IN THE SAME SPOT FOR LONG!



"THOSE WERE HAPPY TIMES FOR MY BROTHER, AQUON, AND ME."

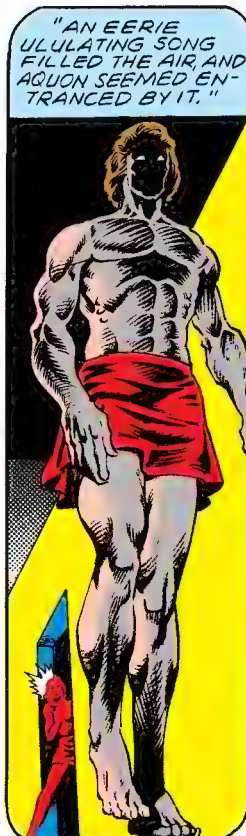
THE LAST ONE IN IS A SCULLERY SERVANT, LITTLE CORAL!

HAVE YOUR MOP READY THEN, AQUON!

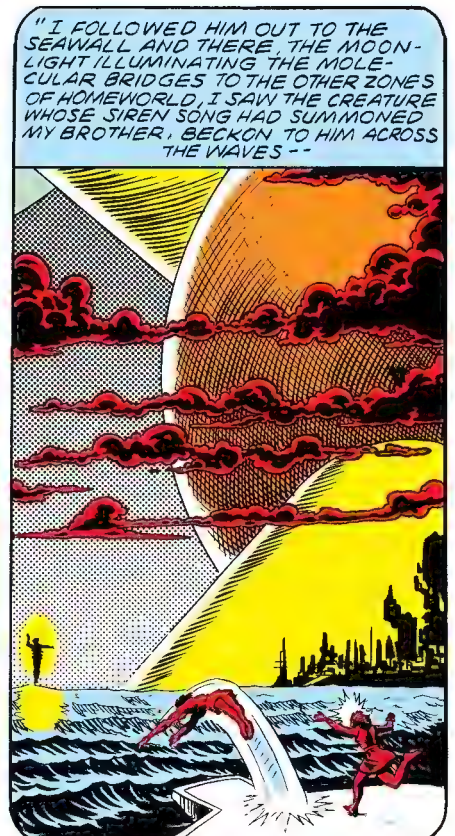


"OUR HAPPINESS, ALAS, WAS SOON ENDED."

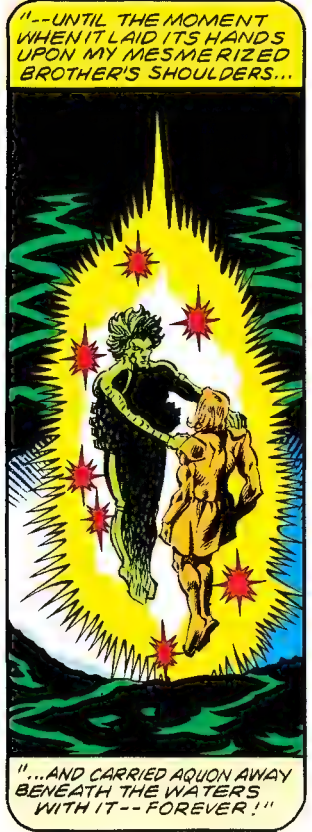
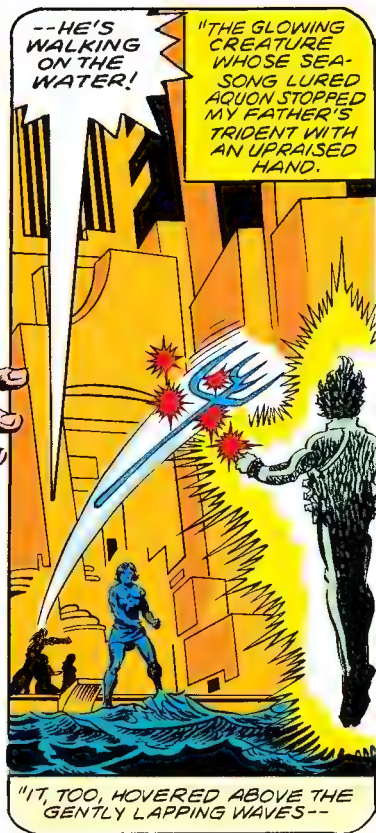
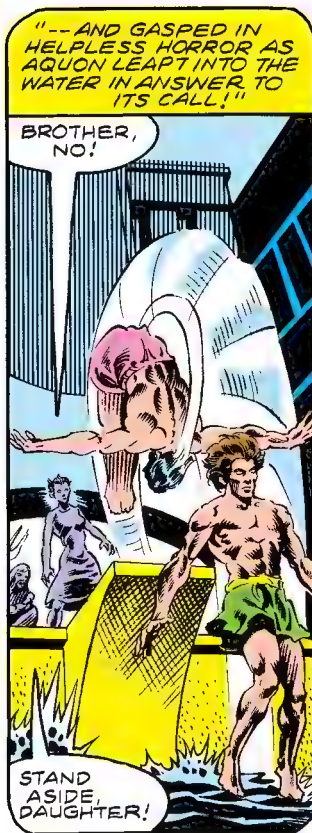
LIGHT SHINING IN MY BED-- WAKING ME! WHAT? AQUON'S SLEEP-WALKING--!

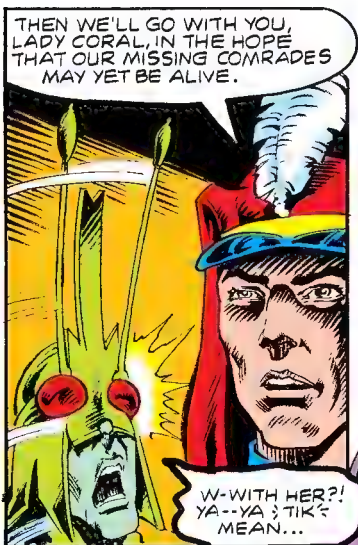
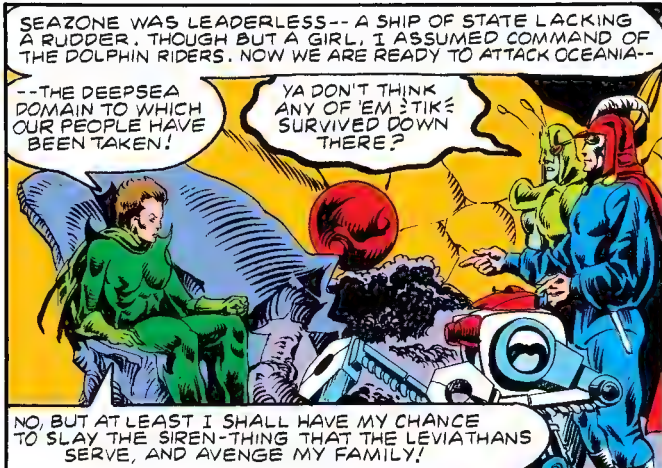


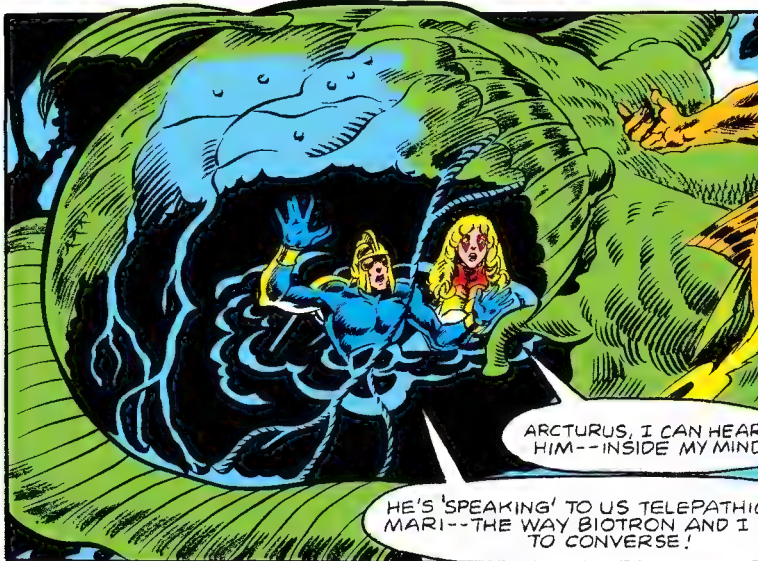
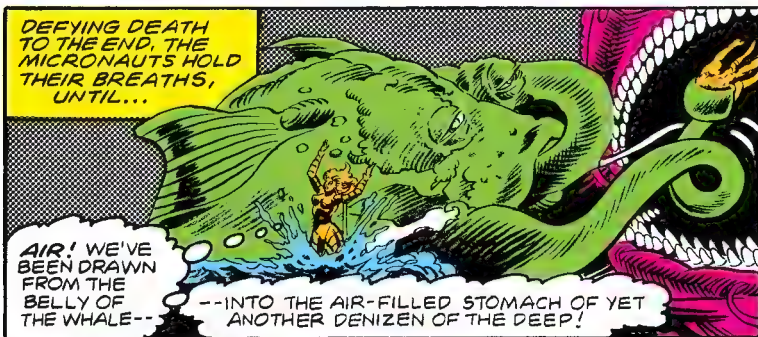
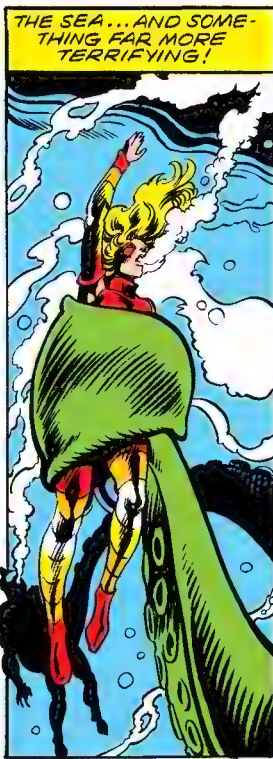
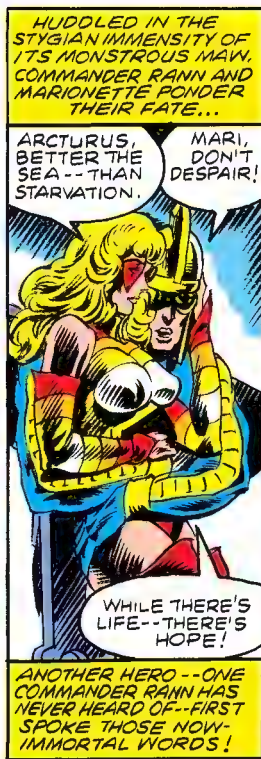
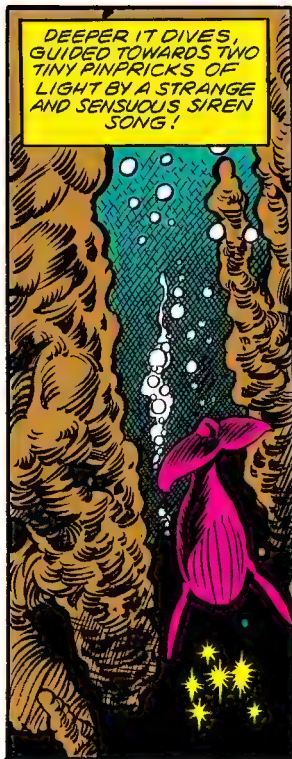
"AN EERIE ULULATING SONG FILLED THE AIR AND AQUON SEEMED ENTRANCED BY IT."



"I FOLLOWED HIM OUT TO THE SEAWALL AND THERE, THE MOON-LIGHT ILLUMINATING THE MOLECULAR BRIDGES TO THE OTHER ZONES OF HOMEWORLD, I SAW THE CREATURE WHOSE SIREN SONG HAD SUMMONED MY BROTHER. BECKON TO HIM ACROSS THE WAVES --"



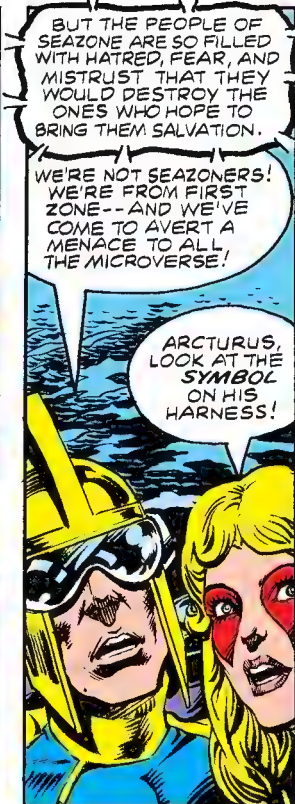






I AM **AQUON**, LORD OF OCEANIA. I REGRET ANY FRIGHT MY LEVIATHAN MIGHT HAVE CAUSED YOU.

WE HAVE NO WISH TO TERRORIZE THOSE WHOM WE WOULD SAVE.



BUT THE PEOPLE OF SEAZONE ARE SO FILLED WITH HATRED, FEAR, AND MISTRUST THAT THEY WOULD DESTROY THE ONES WHO HOPE TO BRING THEM SALVATION.

WE'RE NOT SEAZONERS! WE'RE FROM FIRST ZONE--AND WE'VE COME TO AVERT A MENACE TO ALL, THE MICROVERSE!

ARCTURUS, LOOK AT THE **SYMBOL** ON HIS HARNESS!



IT--IT'S ONE OF THE **THREE KEYS** TO THE **ENIGMA FORCE** THAT WE'VE COME TO FIND!



AQUON, LISTEN TO ME! YOU SPOKE OF A DANGER TO COME! WELL, THERE IS A '**TIME OF DARKNESS**' APPROACHING--A '**GREAT DISTRESS**' THAT WILL THREATEN NOT ONLY HOMEWORLD BUT ALL THE PLANETS OF THE MICROVERSE!

THAT **KEY** YOU WEAR MAY LEAD US TO THE LOST ENIGMA FORCE--THE ONLY POWER THAT CAN POSSIBLY SAVE US!

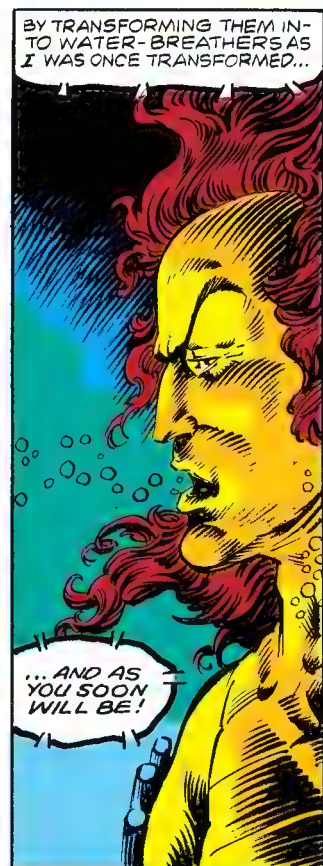
YOU MUST LET US HAVE IT BEFORE...



NO! WITH THIS KEY I MUST FULFILL MY SACRED TRUST--SAVING MY PEOPLE FROM THE GREAT DISASTER THAT WILL TOPPLE THEIR PROUD CITY AND HURL THEM ALL SCREAMING INTO THE SEA!

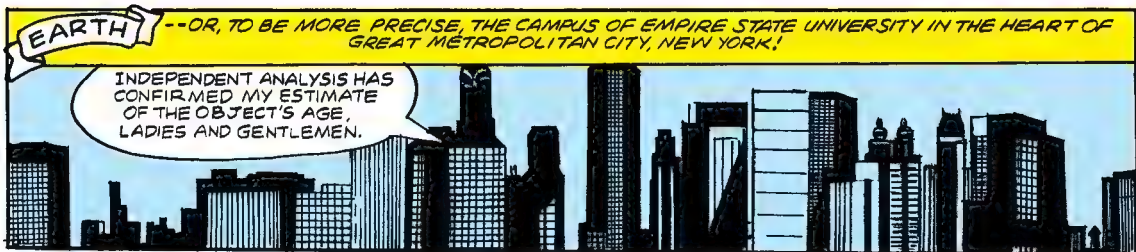
SAVE THEM? HOW?

BY ENABLING THEM TO SURVIVE **BENEATH** THE SURFACE--HERE IN OCEANIA!



BY TRANSFORMING THEM INTO WATER-BREATHERS AS I WAS ONCE TRANSFORMED...

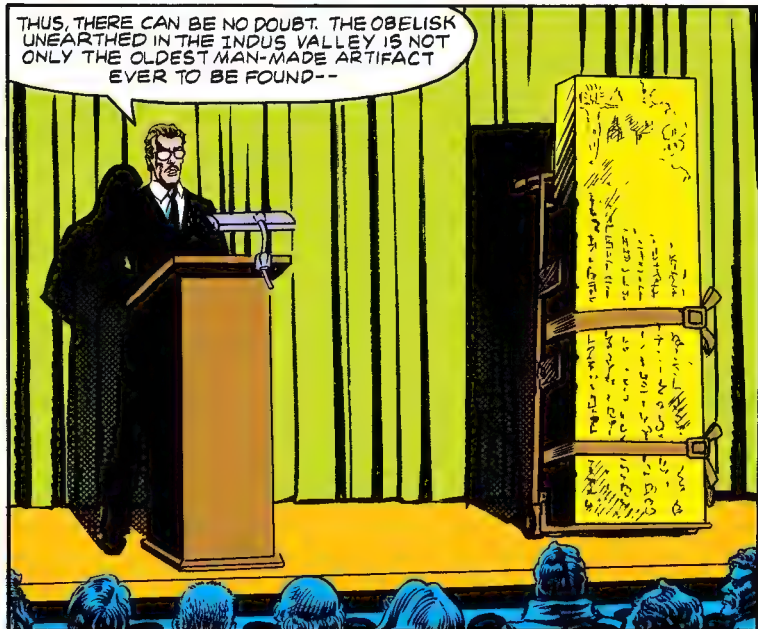
...AND AS YOU SOON WILL BE!



EARTH

--OR, TO BE MORE PRECISE, THE CAMPUS OF EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY IN THE HEART OF GREAT METROPOLITAN CITY, NEW YORK!

INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS HAS
CONFIRMED MY ESTIMATE
OF THE OBJECT'S AGE,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.



THUS, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT. THE OBELISK
UNEARTHED IN THE INDUS VALLEY IS NOT
ONLY THE OLDEST MAN-MADE ARTIFACT
EVER TO BE FOUND--



--BUT IT ALSO PUSHES BACK, BY
MILLIONS OF YEARS, THE DATE,
AT WHICH MAN FIRST CLIMBED
DOWN FROM THE TREES AND
BECAME CIVILIZED.

THE WRITING ON THE TABLET
BESPEAKS A HIGH DEGREE
OF CIVILIZATION.

I SHALL
DEVOTE THE
REST OF MY LIFE
TO DECIPHERING
IT.



THE APPLAUSE IS
DEAFENING AND SUSTAINED.
IT IS THE SOUND DR. MARTIN
VANDENBURG HAS YEARNED
FOR DURING HIS ENTIRE
ACADEMIC CAREER.



IT MAY ALSO BE THE
LAST TIME HE HEARS
IT, FOR TRANSLATING
THE OBELISK HAS DEFIED
ALL HIS CONSIDERABLE
ABILITIES.

IT'S SOME ANCIENT
FORM OF SANSKRIT
--I'M SURE OF IT!
IF ONLY WE
COULD PE-
CIPHER ONE
SYMBOL...

I BELIEVE I
MAY BE ABLE
TO HELP YOU,
DR. VANDENBURG.
SOME OF THE
HIEROGLYPHS
SEEMED...
FAMILIAR
... TO ME.



WHO--?!

A SCHOLAR LIKE YOUR-
SELF SIR, INTERESTED
IN THE ANCIENT AND
UNKNOWN HISTORY
OF MAN ON EARTH.

YOU MAY
CALL ME...
DR. STEPHEN
STRANGE!

**NEXT: MY BODY LIES
OVER OCEANIA!**

50c

31
JULY
02714

MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

A Time of Darkness there will be;
Salvation lies in this Mystic Key!



Space Glider, Marionette, Acroyear, Bug, Microtron, Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannial rule of the evil Baron Karza!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

ON THE UPPER FLOORS OF A GREENWICH VILLAGE TOWNHOUSE, DR. STRANGE, A MYSTIC FROM OUR TIME, MEDITATES ON AN INSCRIPTION ON AN OBELISK CARVED IN AN ARCAINE AND ANCIENT PAST.

IN HIS EFFORT TO STAVE OFF SOME AS-YET-UNKNOWN FUTURE DISASTER, HE IS UNAWARE THAT, IN A SUBMOLECULAR REALM CALLED THE MICROVERSE, THAT FUTURE IS ALREADY COMING TO PASS!

SPACE GLIDER

MARIONETTE

BUG

ACROYEAR

MICROTRON

PHAROID

MY BODY LIES OVER
OCEANIA

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK
WRITER-STORYTELLERS-ARTIST

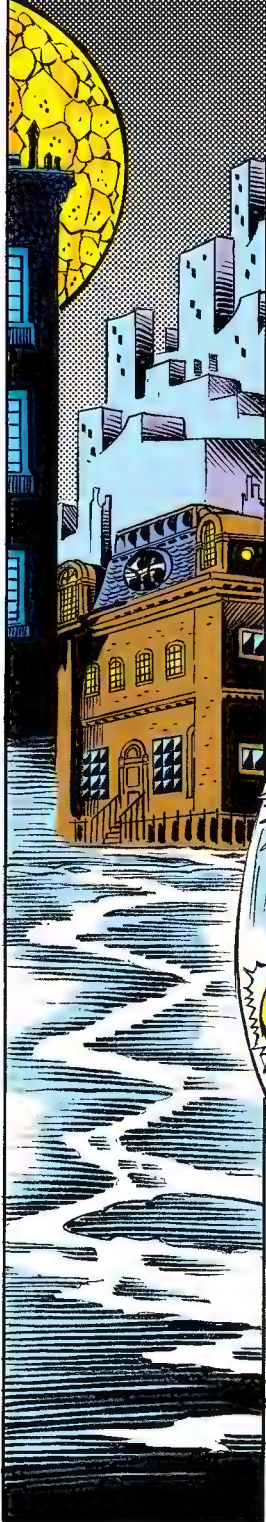
DANNY BULANADI
INKER

JOE ROSEN, LETTERS
BOB SHAREN, COLORS

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
DA BOSS

THE GOLDEN ORB OF THE MOON FUTILELY TRIES TO PIERCE THE FOG ENVELOPING NEW YORK CITY'S GREENWICH VILLAGE...



...EVEN AS, IN THE GARRET OF HIS SANCTUM SANCTORUM, DR. STRANGE ENDEAVORS TO PIERCE THE PAST WITH HIS ALL-SEEING AMULET OF AGAMOTTO ...

EYE OF WONDER,
EYE OF LIGHT,
REVEAL TO ME WITH
SECRET SIGHT,
THOSE MYSTERIES OF WHICH
TH' ANCIENTS DID WRITE,
IN THE LANGUAGE LOST
TO THE PAST'S DARK
NIGHT!



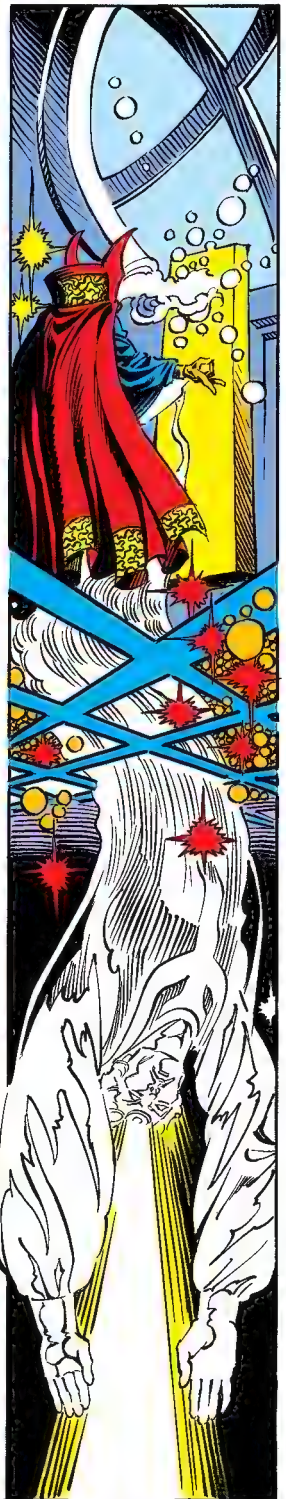
OBEYING THE INCANTATION, AN ELDRITCH EYE SEPARATES ITSELF FROM THE GOLDEN AMULET AND TAKES UP A POSITION AT THE MAGE'S FOREHEAD,

THERE, IT BROADENS THE RANGE OF DR. STRANGE'S VISUAL ACUITY, ENABLING HIM TO SEE BEYOND THIS TIME--



--TO THE PAST WHEREIN THE OBELISK BEFORE HIM WAS WROUGHT.

BUT MERE OBSERVATION IS NOT ENOUGH. FREEDING HIS ECTOPLASMIC ASTRAL FORM FROM HIS PHYSICAL BODY--



--DR. STRANGE TRAVELS BACK THROUGH THE CENTURIES! GUIDED BY THE EYE OF AGAMOTTO, HE JOURNEYS TO...

...A
TIME
OUT
OF
MIND!

THE OBELISK WAS DISCOVERED ON
THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT CITY IN
BAHAWALPUR, INDIA. ITS INSCRIPTION
BAFFLED ITS DISCOVERER, DR. MARTIN
VANDENBURG.

BUT I, ATTENDING HIS SYMPOSIUM,
RECOGNIZED THE WRITING AS A
PRECURSOR TO ANCIENT SANSKRIT.
DECIPHERING IT, I WAS ABLE
TO READ:

"A TIME OF DARKNESS
WILL THERE BE,
OF GREAT DISTRESS
ON LAND AND SEA!
FIND THYSELVES AND
THOU WILT FIND ME--
THE SECRET LIES IN
THESE KEYS THREE!"

THREE KEYS
WERE PICTURED
ON THE OBELISK,
WHICH WAS
INSCRIBED IN
THAT CITY I
SEE BELOW.

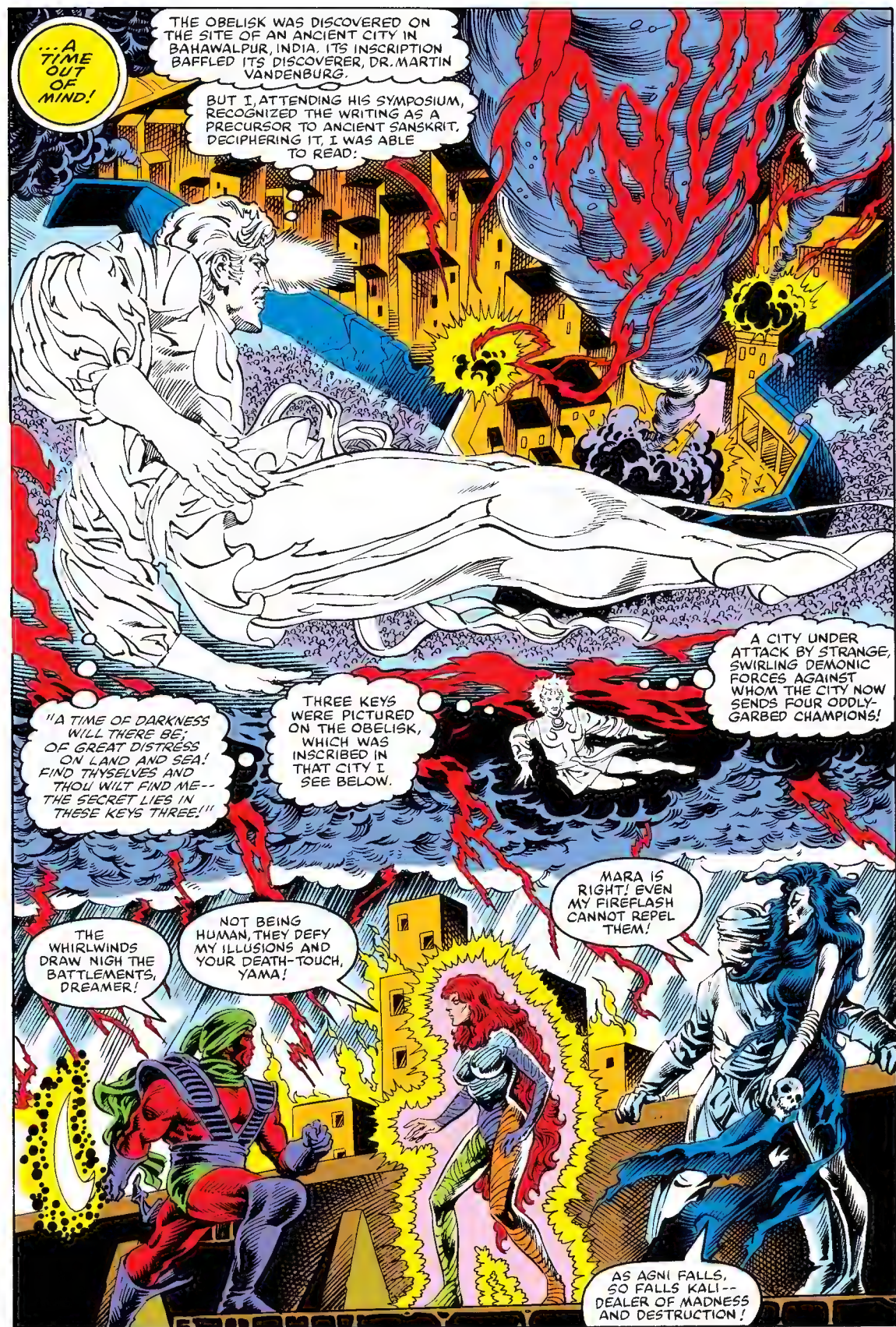
A CITY UNDER
ATTACK BY STRANGE,
SWIRLING DEMONIC
FORCES AGAINST
WHOM THE CITY NOW
SENDS FOUR ODDLY-
GARBED CHAMPIONS!

THE
WHIRLWINDS
DRAW NIGH THE
BATTLEMENTS,
DREAMER!

NOT BEING
HUMAN, THEY DEFEY
MY ILLUSIONS AND
YOUR DEATH-TOUCH,
YAMA!

MARA IS
RIGHT! EVEN
MY FIREFLASH
CANNOT REPEL
THEM!

AS AGNI FALLS,
SO FALLS KALI--
DEALER OF MADNESS
AND DESTRUCTION!



THE DEMONS ASSAIL THE WALLS OF THE CITY AGAIN! THE PRINCE HAS NO MORE ARMIES TO HURL AGAINST THEM!

TO HURL TO DESTRUCTION, YOU MEAN, DESTROYER! NO, OUR BLIND LIEGE HAS NO DEFENSE NOW TO SAVE US!

WHOEVER THESE BEINGS ARE, THEY BEAR NAMES AND POWERS THAT MIMIC THOSE OF THE **HINDU GODS!**

--LEST I IRREVOCABLY ALTER DAYS YET TO COME, THE FOUR CHAMPIONS SPOKE OF THEIR PRINCE.

I WILL VOYAGE WITHIN HIS PALACE TO SEE HOW HE INTENDS TO PRESERVE HIS PEOPLE FROM PERIL.

I SUSPECT MY MYSTIC MIGHT COULD TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE, BUT I DARE NOT INTERVENE IN WHAT WAS PAST--

AND WHILE WE LIVE, WE FIGHT, DEATH-LORD-- FOR TWAS PRINCE WAYFINDER WHO SAVED US FROM DESPAIR AND BUILT US THIS CITY!

THEN MAY HE SAVE US AGAIN, MARA--FOR THE DEMONS ARE UPON US!

AHEAD, DR. STRANGE HEARS AN ANGUISHED VOICE--

--AND COMES UPON THE SPEAKER ENGAGED IN CONVERSATION WITH... A STAR IMPALED UPON A SWORD!

IS THIS THE PASS TO WHICH YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME, SUNSWORD? IS THIS WHY YOU GRANTED ME VICTORY AGAINST THE ALIEN HAAMIN WHO RAVAGED MY FATHER'S REALM...

... ONLY TO SEE US SUFFER DESTRUCTION FROM THE DEMONS INHABITING THIS WORLD?

I BLINDED YOUR EYES SO YOU'D HAVE A DEEPER VISION, WAYFINDER. SO WHERE IS IT? WHERE'S YOUR FAITH?

THE SWORD... SPEAKS!

IT IS WITH MY LOST PEOPLE, SWORD...



SIGH! THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS! START GIVING OUT WITH THE MIRACLES, AND THEY'RE NEVER SATISFIED!

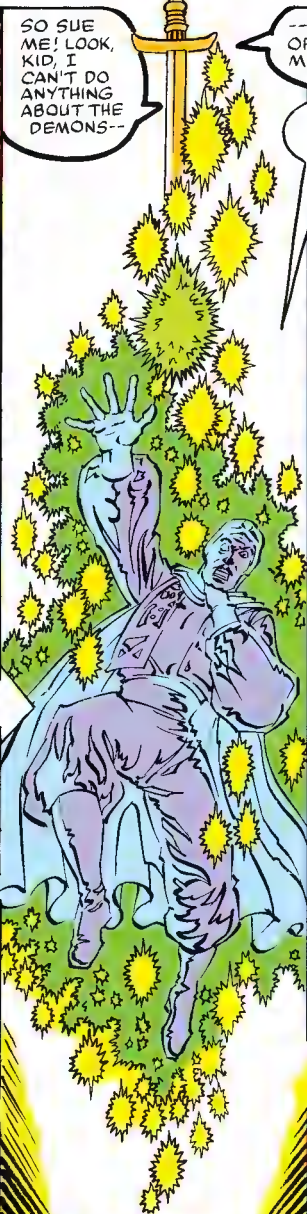
THIS A MIRACLE? YOU SAID THIS WORLD WAS UNINHABITED! YOU WERE WRONG, SWORD!

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS.



LIKE I SAID, CHANGES! I'M TIRED OF PULLING YOUR FAT OUT OF THE FIRE AND THEN BEING BLAMED FOR NOT DOING ENOUGH!

THE SUN-SWORD IS TRANSFORMING THE PRINCE AND HIS PEOPLE-- FILLING THEM WITH ITS OWN AWESOME POWER...



SO SUE ME! LOOK, KID, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE DEMONS--



--BUT I CAN GET YOU OFFWORLD BEFORE THEY MAKE MINCEMEAT OF YOU!

AND MY PEOPLE? YOU'LL SAVE THEM, TOO?

YEAH, ALL RIGHT-- BUT THIS TIME THERE ARE GOING TO BE SOME CHANGES!

MY LIEGE, THE DEMONS HAVE--!

OUR PRINCE, AGNI! LOOK TO OUR PRINCE!



...AND ALLOWING THEM TO PASS SAFELY FROM EARTH INTO SOME SUBATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM, EVEN AS THE DEMONS DESTROY WHAT REMAINS OF THEIR CITY!

HIS ASTRAL FORM RETURNING TO HIS CORPOREAL BODY AND HIS OWN TIME, THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS ASKS HIMSELF...

SO WHAT WAS IT THAT I WITNESSED? A BELEAGUERED KINGDOM, BESIEGED BY DEMONS--

--WHOSE PRINCE WAS INVESTED WITH THE POWER OF AN INCREDIBLE SWORD THAT HE MIGHT LEAD HIS SUBJECTS SAFELY--

-- TO A SUBATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM SEPARATED FROM OUR OWN BY A BARRIER IN SPACE.

ANCIENT HISTORY? OR DOES THAT CENTURIES-OLD EXODUS PORTEND ILL FOR OUR WORLD AND OUR TIME?

THE SENSE OF DREAD EMANATING FROM THIS LIFELESS STONE SUGGESTS TO MY SORCEROUS SENSES THAT IT DOES!

I MUST KNOW MORE, EVEN IF IT MEANS DR. STRANGE MUST JOURNEY TO...THE MICROVERSE!

AND SO WE TAKE OUR LEAVE OF THE SORCERER SUPREME...

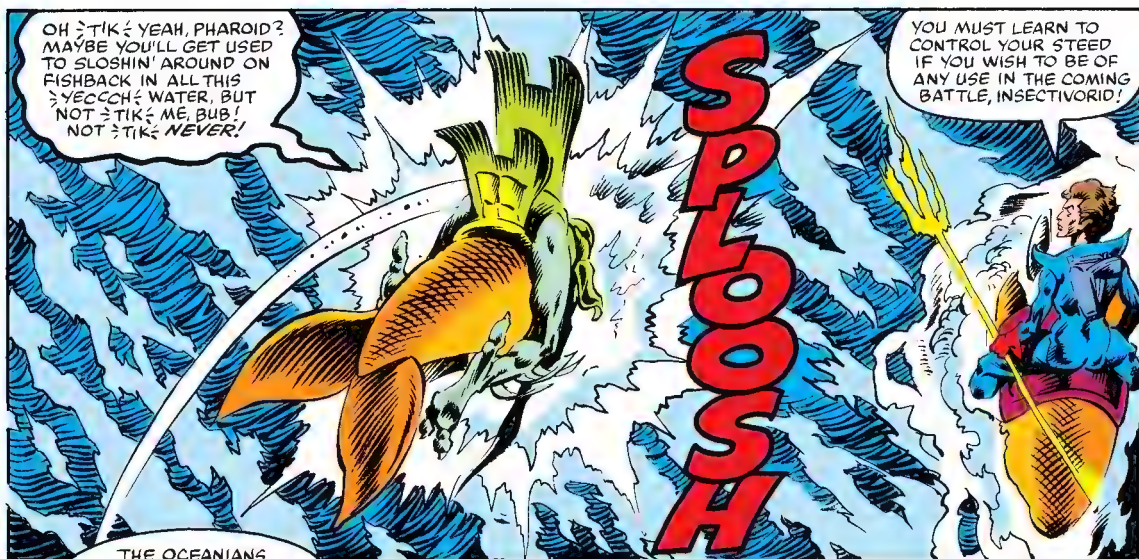
...AND PRECEDE HIM TO THAT SAME MICROVERSE, WHERE THOSE VERY "GREAT DISTRESSES" OF WHICH THE ANCIENT OBELISK SPOKE ARE NOW APPEARING.

ON THE MOLECULE OCEANIA OF THE PLANET HOMEWORLD, OUR MARVELOUS MICRO-NAUTS HAVE JOINED FORCES WITH LADY CORAL AND HER DOLPHIN-RIDERS OF SEAZONE...

...TO SEEK REVENGE UPON THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY BENEATH THE SEA.

PHAROID! MICROTRON! STIK! HELP! FISH-RIDIN'S EVEN WORSE THAN STIK! FLYIN'!

AS THE LEADER OF A DESERT KINGDOM, I'M AS MUCH OUT OF MY ELEMENT AS YOU ARE, BUG! BUT WE'LL GET USED TO SEAZONE'S MODE OF WARFARE. WE'LL HAVE TO, IF WE'RE TO RESCUE COMMANDER RANN AND MARIONETTE.



OH 3-TIK 3 YEAH, PHAROID?
MAYBE YOU'LL GET USED
TO SLOSHIN' AROUND ON
FISHBACK IN ALL THIS
3-YECCCH 3 WATER, BUT
NOT 3-TIK 3 ME, BUB!
NOT 3-TIK 3 NEVER!

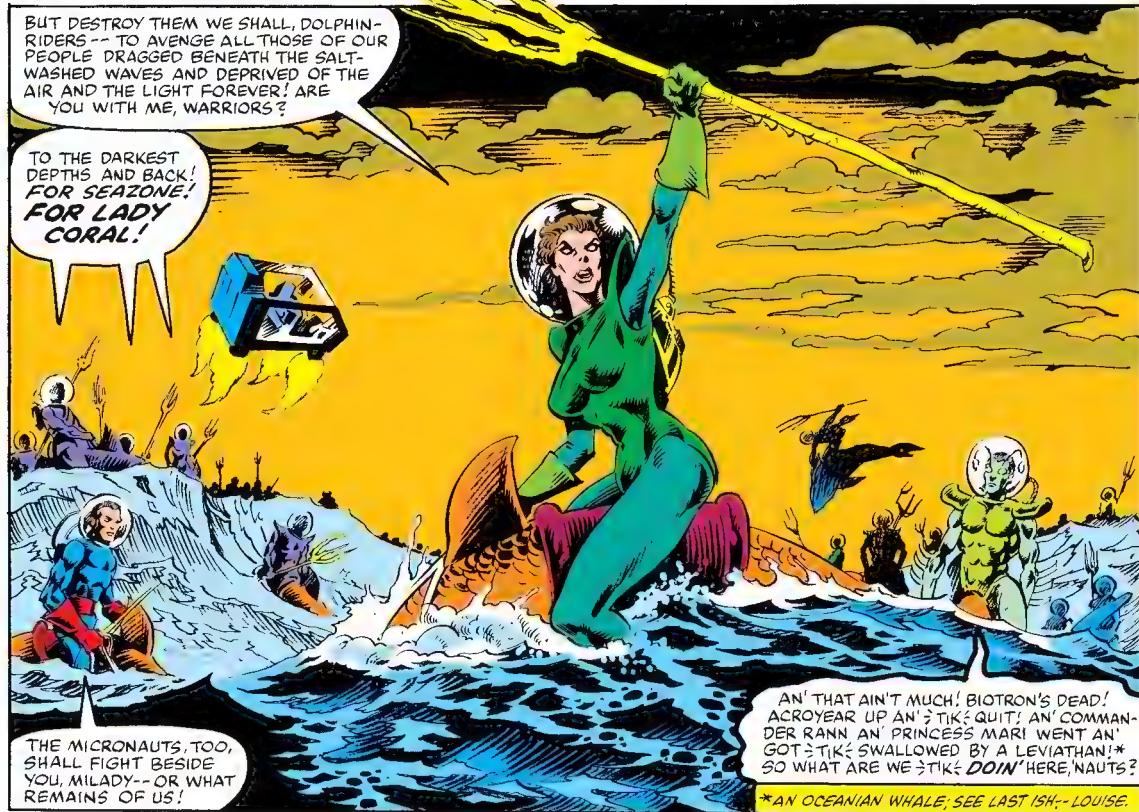
YOU MUST LEARN TO
CONTROL YOUR STEED
IF YOU WISH TO BE OF
ANY USE IN THE COMING
BATTLE, INSECTIVORID!

SPLASH

THE OCEANIANS
ARE AT HOME BOTH ON
AND BELOW THE WAVES
OF THIS SUBMERGED
MOLECULE! FROM HERE
THEY HAVE LAUNCHED COUNT-
LESS RAIDS AGAINST
SEAZONE, MY CITY.



AND, AS WE DEFEND OURSELVES
FROM THEM, SO WILL THEY FIGHT
FEROCIOUSLY AGAINST US!



BUT DESTROY THEM WE SHALL, DOLPHIN-
RIDERS -- TO AVENGE ALL THOSE OF OUR
PEOPLE DRAGGED BENEATH THE SALT-
WASHED WAVES AND DEPRIVED OF THE
AIR AND THE LIGHT FOREVER! ARE
YOU WITH ME, WARRIORS?

TO THE DARKEST
DEPTHS AND BACK!
FOR SEAZONE!
FOR LADY
CORAL!

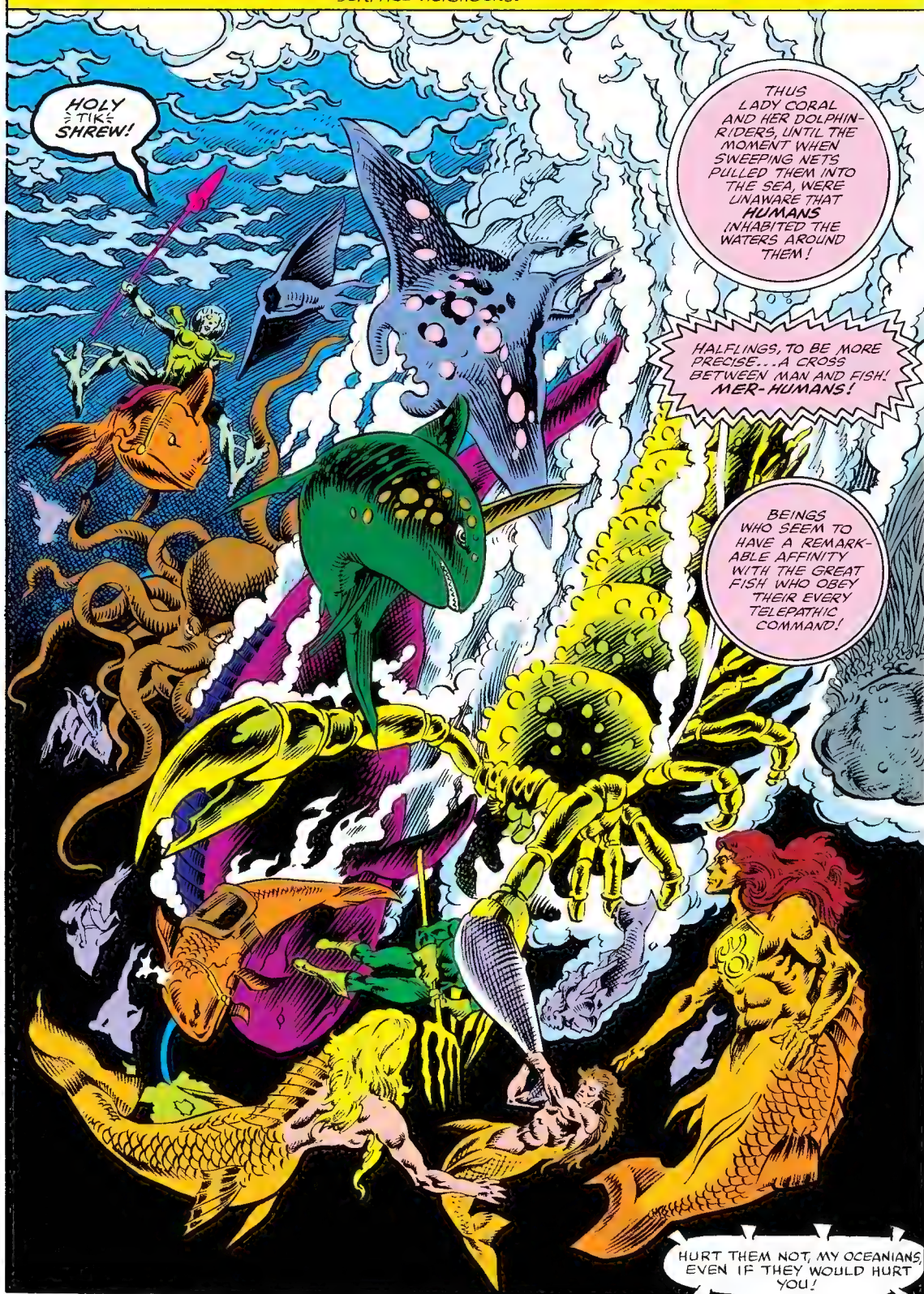
THE MICRONAUTS, TOO,
SHALL FIGHT BESIDE
YOU, MILADY-- OR WHAT
REMAINS OF US!

AN' THAT AIN'T MUCH! BIOTRON'S DEAD!
ACROYEAR UP AN' 3-TIK 3 QUIT! AN' COMMAN-
DER RANN AN' PRINCESS MARI WENT AN'
GOT 3-TIK 3 SWALLOWED BY A LEVIATHAN! *
SO WHAT ARE WE 3-TIK 3 DOIN' HERE, NAUTS?

*AN OCEANIAN WHALE, SEE LAST ISH-- LOUISE.



ON HOMEWORLD, ANY DEEPSEA CREATURE OF COLOSSAL PROPORTIONS OR MONSTROUS APPEARANCE IS DUBBED 'LEVIATHAN'. IT IS A CONVENIENT CATCH-ALL THAT INADEQUATELY DESCRIBES THE NUMBER AND NATURE OF THESE DWELLERS IN THE DEPTHS. FEW SURFACE DWELLERS HAVE EVER DARED COME CLOSE ENOUGH TO ATTEMPT TO CATEGORIZE THEM AND EVEN THE SEASONERS, OCCUPYING THEIR FLOATING CITY, KNOW LITTLE OF THEIR SUB-SURFACE NEIGHBORS.



HOLY
TIKE
SHREW!

THUS
LADY CORAL
AND HER DOLPHIN-
RIDERS, UNTIL THE
MOMENT WHEN
SWEEPING NETS
PULLED THEM INTO
THE SEA, WERE
UNAWARE THAT
HUMANS
INHABITED THE
WATERS AROUND
THEM!

HALFLINGS, TO BE MORE
PRECISE... A CROSS
BETWEEN MAN AND FISH!
MER-HUMANS!

BEINGS
WHO SEEM TO
HAVE A REMARK-
ABLE AFFINITY
WITH THE GREAT
FISH WHO OBEY
THEIR EVERY
TELEPATHIC
COMMAND!

HURT THEM NOT, MY OCEANIANS,
EVEN IF THEY WOULD HURT
YOU!

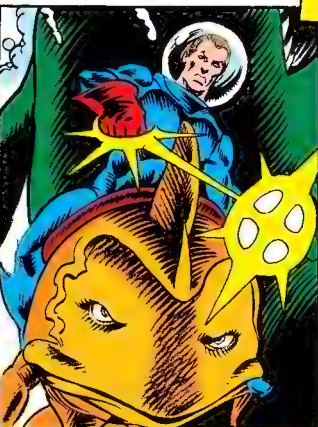
THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT ON MANY FRONTS, WITH MANY INCONGRUITIES.



BUG, WHO HATES EVERYTHING RELATING TO THE SEA, FINDS HIMSELF STARING DOWN THE MAW OF A CREATURE HE'D COMMONLY REGARD AS SEA-FOOD...



...WHILE THE WATER-LOVING SEA-ZONERS LOCK IN COMBAT WITH WATER-BREATHING OCEANIANS!



PHAROID, WHOSE DESERT KINGDOM SEES BARELY AN INCH OF WATER A YEAR, UNLEASHES THE POWER OF HIS STAR SCEPTER--



--AGAINST A CREATURE WHO WOULD PERISH IN SECONDS FOR WANT OF WATER IN FAR OFF AEGYPTA!

LITTLE MICROTRON BATTLES BRAVELY--



--AGAINST A VERY BIG FISH!



AND LADY CORAL, WHO SOUGHT THIS WAR TO AVENGE THOSE OF HER PEOPLE CARRIED BENEATH THE WAVES...

...NOW RECOGNIZES THE ONE WHOSE LOSS HAD FILLED HER WITH AN EVERLASTING HATRED OF ALL THINGS OCEANIAN!



YOU!

AQUON!

MY BROTHER!

GREETINGS,
LITTLE SISTER.
I FEAR WE ARE
NOT WELL-MET.

YOU, FLESH OF MY FLESH,
TURNED INTO ONE OF
THESE... *MER-HUMANS!*
FOR YEARS WE THOUGHT
YOU DEAD. EVER SINCE
THAT NIGHT WHEN A
SIREN'S SONG LURED YOU
AWAY FROM OUR FLOAT-
ING CITY AND INTO THE
COLD, CRUEL SEA!

YOUR DISAPPEARANCE
KILLED OUR MOTHER,
BROKE OUR FATHER'S
SPIRIT, AND LED ME TO
ASSUME YOUR DUTIES
AND BECOME THE
WARRIOR-WOMAN
REGENT OF SEAZONE!

A TRAITOR,
MY SISTER?
NOT I.

HOW I CHERISHED
YOUR MEMORY! HOW I
PLANNED REVENGE AGAINST
OCEANIA IN YOUR NAME!
YET, NOW I SEE YOU
LIVE - A *TRAITOR*
TO YOUR RACE!

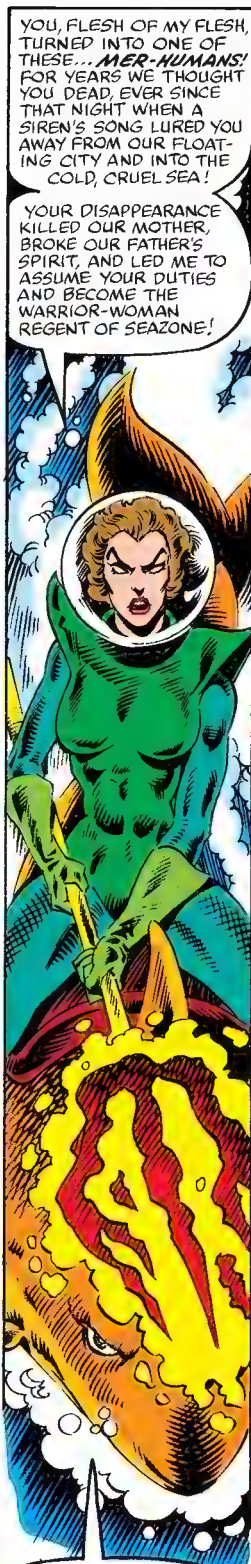
I DID BUT ANSWER
A STRANGER'S CALL, ON
THAT NIGHT LONG GONE,
IN ORDER TO BECOME
SEAZONE'S *SAVIOR*.
'T WAS HE WHO MADE
ME WHAT I AM.

WISE HE WAS, AND OLD,
AND GLOWING LIKE THE
STARS. HE SPOKE TO ME OF
A 'TIME OF DARKNESS,' OF
A 'GREAT DISTRESS' THAT
WOULD TOPPLE SEAZONE
AND HURL HER PEOPLE
INTO THE SEA.

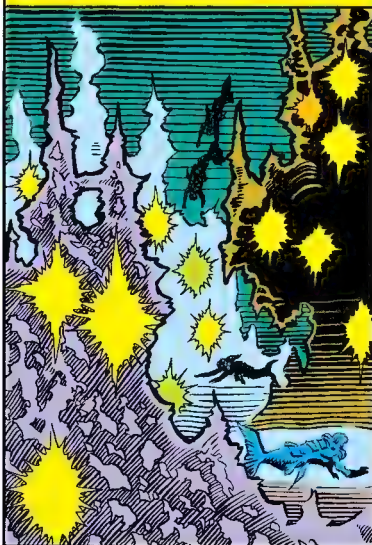
THE DISASTER COULD
NOT BE AVERTED, HE
SAID, BUT OUR PEOPLE
COULD BE SAVED...
WITH THIS *KEY*.

SOME HAVE ALREADY
FELT ITS POWER, LITTLE
SISTER. SHALL YOU
BE NEXT?

AQUON RAISES THE KEY
ON HIGH...



... WHILE, IN THE DARKLING DEPTHS, AMIDST OCEANIA'S CARVED CORAL CITADELS, TWO OF OUR HOMEWORLD HEROES REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR.

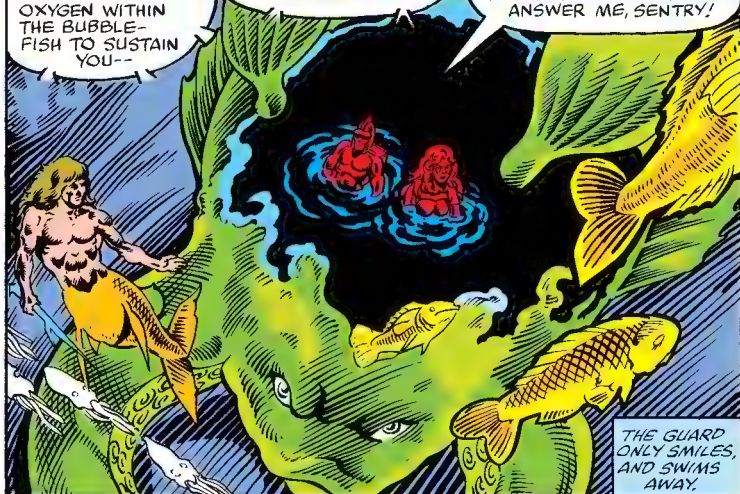


THEY ARE COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN AND THE LOVELY MARIONETTE, TAKEN WHEN THEY RESISTED A MIGHTY LEVIATHAN, ONLY TO BE CARRIED OFF INTO CAPTIVITY WITHIN THE VERY BELLY OF THE WHALE!

FEAR NOT, AIR-BREATHERS, THERE IS SUFFICIENT OXYGEN WITHIN THE BUBBLE-FISH TO SUSTAIN YOU--

--UNTIL YOU HAVE NO NEED OF OXYGEN EVERMORE.

IS DEATH, THEN, THE 'CHANGE' IN US WHICH YOUR KING AQUON FORBID? ANSWER ME, SENTRY!



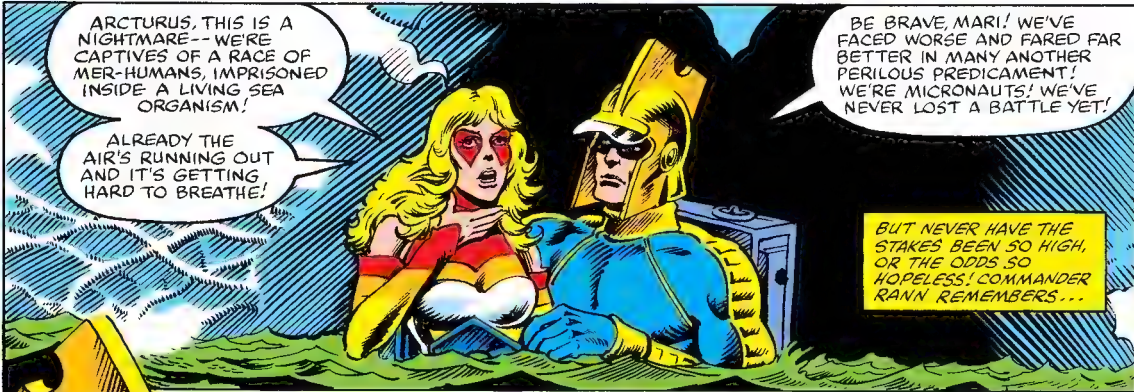
THE GUARD ONLY SMILES, AND SWIMS AWAY.

ARCTURUS, THIS IS A NIGHTMARE-- WE'RE CAPTIVES OF A RACE OF MER-HUMANS, IMPRISONED INSIDE A LIVING SEA ORGANISM!

ALREADY THE AIR'S RUNNING OUT AND IT'S GETTING HARD TO BREATHE!

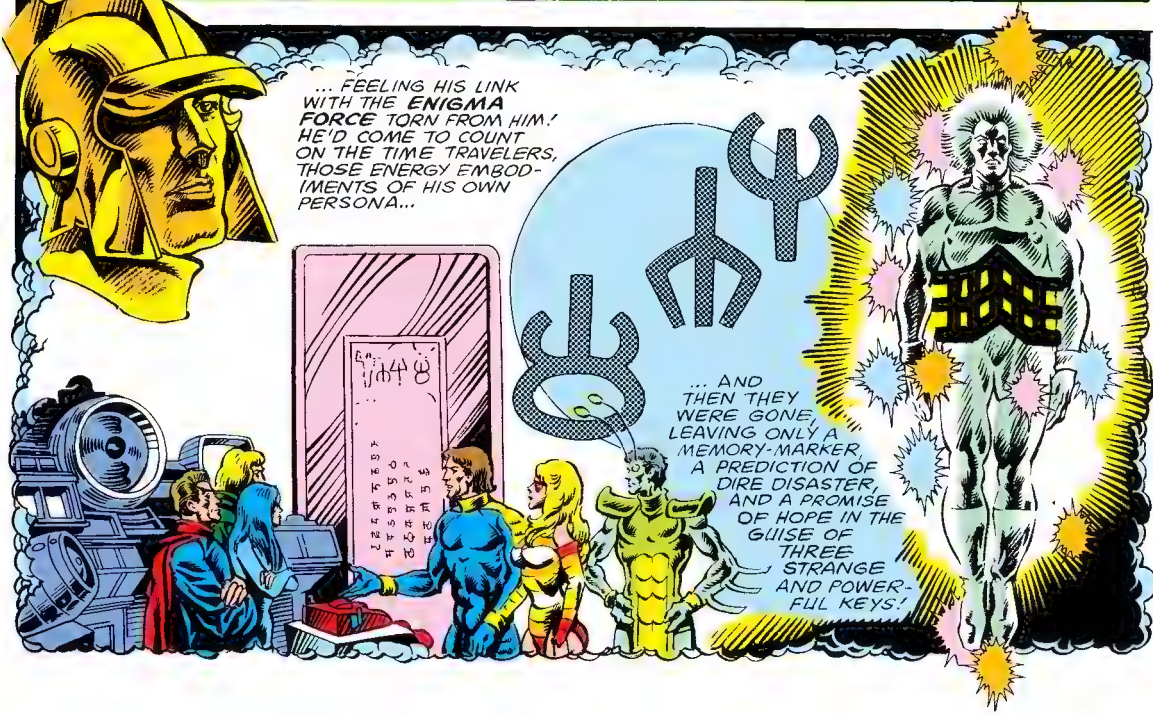
BE BRAVE, MARI! WE'VE FACED WORSE AND FARED FAR BETTER IN MANY ANOTHER PERILOUS PREDICAMENT! WE'RE MICRONAUTS! WE'VE NEVER LOST A BATTLE YET!

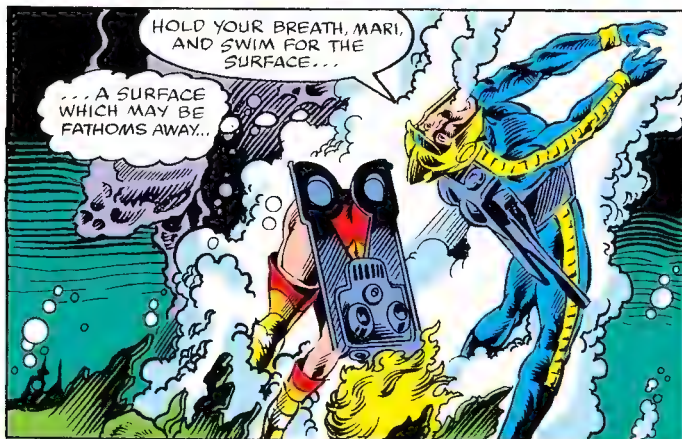
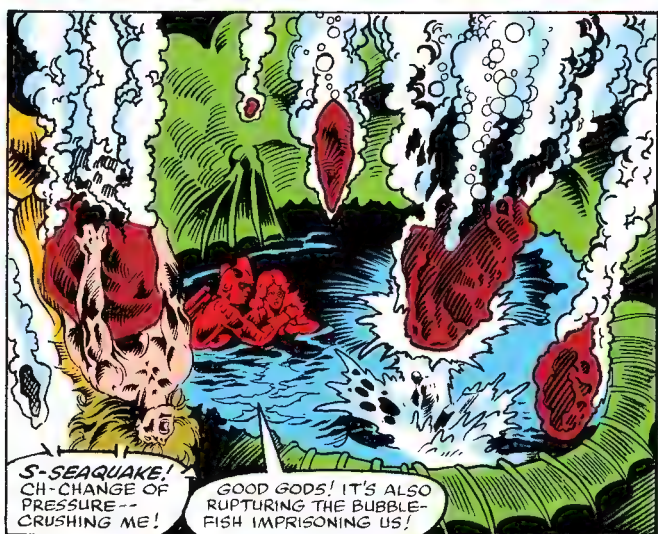
BUT NEVER HAVE THE STAKES BEEN SO HIGH, OR THE ODDS SO HOPELESS! COMMANDER RANN REMEMBERS...



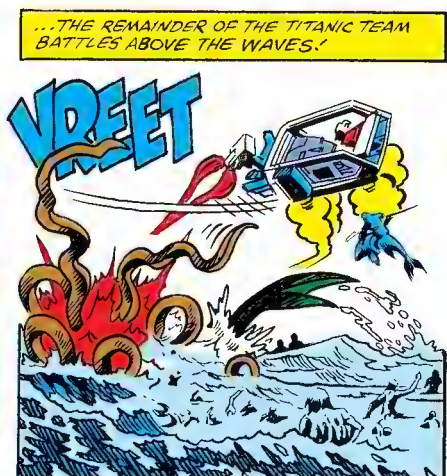
... FEELING HIS LINK WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE TORN FROM HIM! HE'D COME TO COUNT ON THE TIME TRAVELERS, THOSE ENERGY EMBODIMENTS OF HIS OWN PERSONA...

... AND THEN THEY WERE GONE, LEAVING ONLY A MEMORY-MARKER, A PREDICTION OF DIRE DISASTER, AND A PROMISE OF HOPE IN THE GUISE OF THREE STRANGE AND POWERFUL KEYS!





EVEN AS TWO OF OUR MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS WAGE A DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE...



KEEP THOSE SLIMY SUCKERS TO YOURSELF, LEVIATHAN! YOU'RE NOT GETTING THIS ROBOD INTO THE WATER! I RUST!

BUT WHAT OF BUG AND PRINCE PHAROID? I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM SINCE THEY FOLLOWED LADY CORAL BENEATH THE SURFACE!

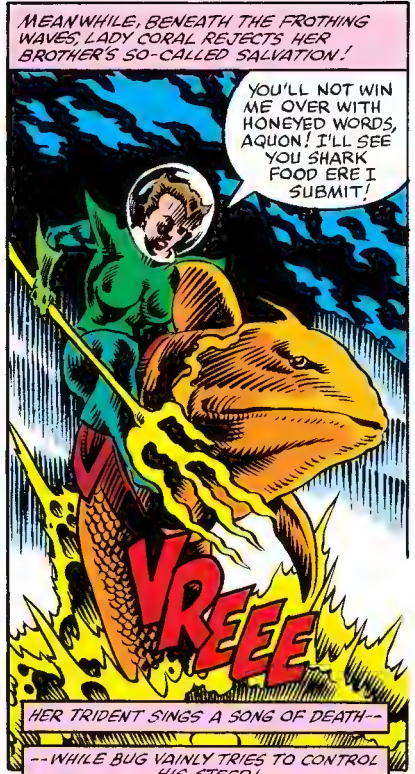


OH, DEAR! HOW I WISH I WERE SAFELY BACK IN IN FIRST ZONE, COZILY EXCHANGING CAPACITORS WITH MY LOVELY LITTLE NANOTRON!*

* A FEMINE-DESIGN ROBOD MICROTRON MET LAST ISH-- LOUISE.

MEANWHILE, BENEATH THE FROTHING WAVES, LADY CORAL REJECTS HER BROTHER'S SO-CALLED SALVATION!

YOU'LL NOT WIN ME OVER WITH HONEYED WORDS, AQUON! I'LL SEE YOU SHARK FOOD ERE I SUBMIT!



HER TRIDENT SINGS A SONG OF DEATH--

--WHILE BUG VAINLY TRIES TO CONTROL HIS STEED!

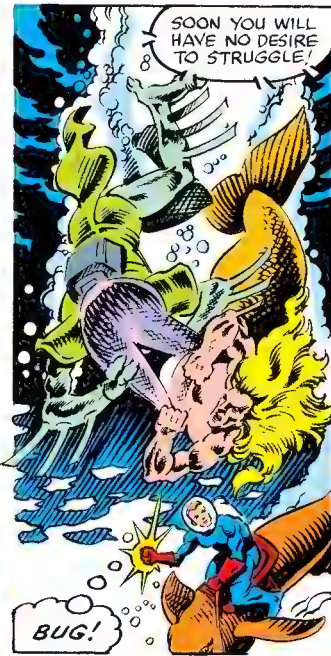


UP! I MEAN STIKE DOWN!

YOU ARE NETTED, LITTLE LEAF-HOPPER!

GLLLM STIKES MMMPH!

SOON YOU WILL HAVE NO DESIRE TO STRUGGLE!

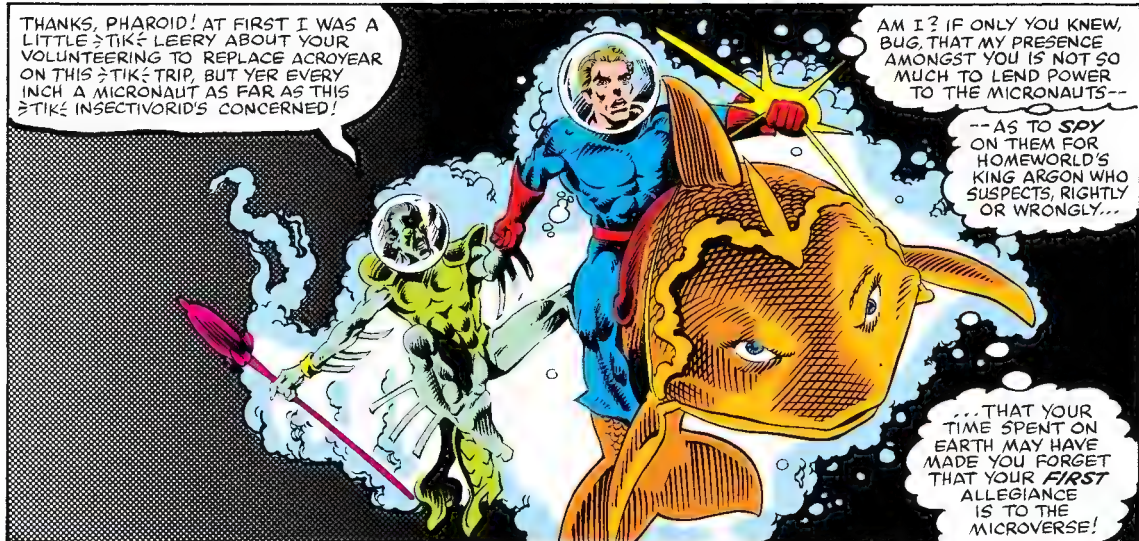


BUG!

MY STAR SCEPTER IS MEANT TO BE WIELDED ONLY IN AEGYPTA'S DEFENSE-- YET THE MICRONAUTS FIGHT FOR THE MICROVERSE AS A WHOLE!

THUS I JUSTIFY MY ACTION!





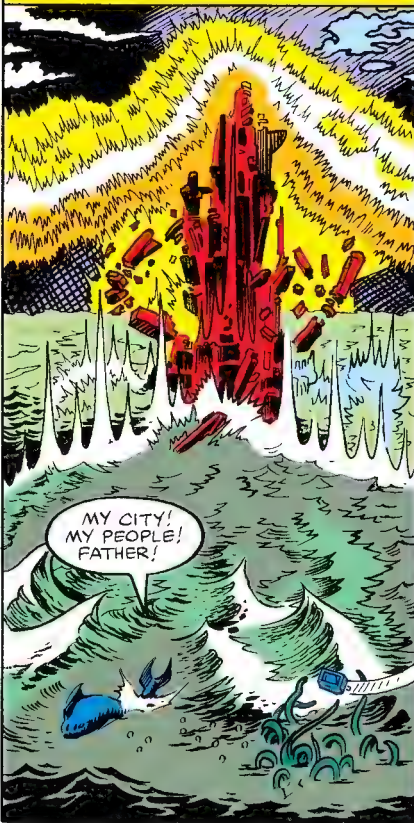
BUT, ABSORBED IN HER SELF-MADE MISSION, LADY CORAL HEARS NOTHING SAVE THE RAGING OF HER OWN HATRED HAMMERING AT HER HEART!



GEE, PHAROID-- MEBBE I GOT 3TIK3 WATER IN MY EARS, BUT THERE'S THAT SOUND AGAIN! LOUDER! 3TIK3 CLOSER! AN' IT DON'T SOUND LIKE 3TIK3 BREAKERS ANYMORE! IT SOUNDS MORE 3TIK3 LIKE--



INDEED, THE FAR-FAMED FLOATING CITY ERECTED BY CORAL AND AQUON'S FATHER SHUDDERS, AND BEGINS TO TOPPLE AS ITS BASE IS ROCKED BY THE PRELIMINARY SHOCKS OF THE SAME MIGHTY SEAQUAKE WHICH, MOMENTS EARLIER SHUDDERED THROUGHOUT OCEANIA!



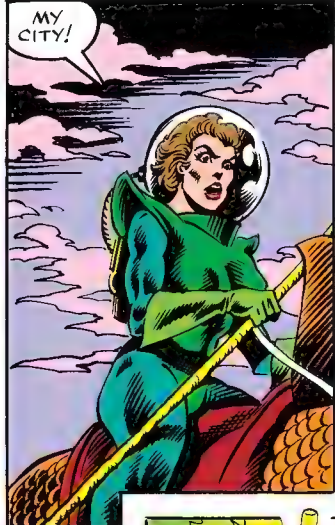
WARNED BY THE RUMBLINGS, MANY OF SEAZONE'S CITIZENS RUSH TO THE QUAYS! THERE, FACED WITH FALLING STONE AND THRASHING SEA, THEY MAKE THE ONLY CHOICE THEY CAN!



OTHERS, UNSURE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING, CHOOSE TO STAY BEHIND-- STILL OTHERS STAY OUT OF LOYALTY!



AND SO THE DEAF-MUTE GIANT BODYGUARD STANDS, SHELTERING THE KING'S BODY WITH HIS OWN, UNTIL BOTH FINALLY PERISH.



MY CITY!

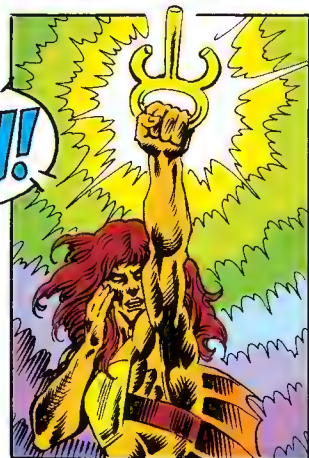


MY PEOPLE!

FATHER!



NOW!



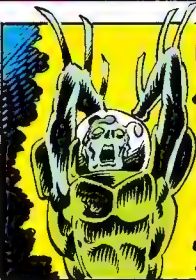
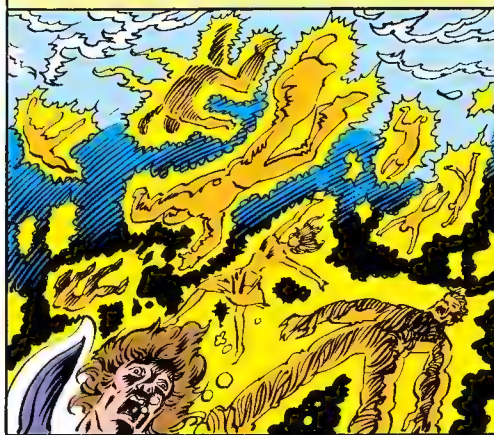
AQUA MAN KNOWS HE CAN WAIT NO LONGER-- THAT HE HAS ALREADY WAITED LONG ENOUGH! THE 'GREAT DISTRESS' OF WHICH THE GLOWING STRANGER WARNED HIM-- AND OF WHICH HE WARNED CORAL-- IS UPON SEAZONE!

HE HAD HOPED TO SAVE SEAZONE BEFORE THE TOPPLING TOWERS DROVE ITS PEOPLE SCREAMING INTO THE SEA, BUT HE HAD MIS-CALCULATED. THE BATTLE-- HIS EFFORTS TO WIN OVER HIS SISTER-- HAD DELAYED HIM!

NOW THERE CAN BE NO DELAY! HE LIFTS THE GLOWING KEY HIGH OVER THE QUAKE-TOSSED WAVES! HE MOUTHS THE WORDS TAUGHT HIM BY THE SHINING STRANGER LO, THESE MANY YEARS AGO...

A TIME OF DARKNESS WILL THERE BE; OF GREAT DISTRESS ON LAND AND SEA! THOUGH CITIES FALL, NEW LIFE SHALL BE GRANTED BY THIS SHINING KEY!

THE KEY'S GLOW SURROUNDS ALL THOSE WHO, FEARING FOR THEIR LIVES, THRASH ABOUT IN THE SALT-WASHED WATERS OF THE SEA!



PHAROID! WHAT'S 'TAK HAPPENIN' TA US?!

WE-WE'RE CHANGING, BUG! THE KEY IS CHANGING US!



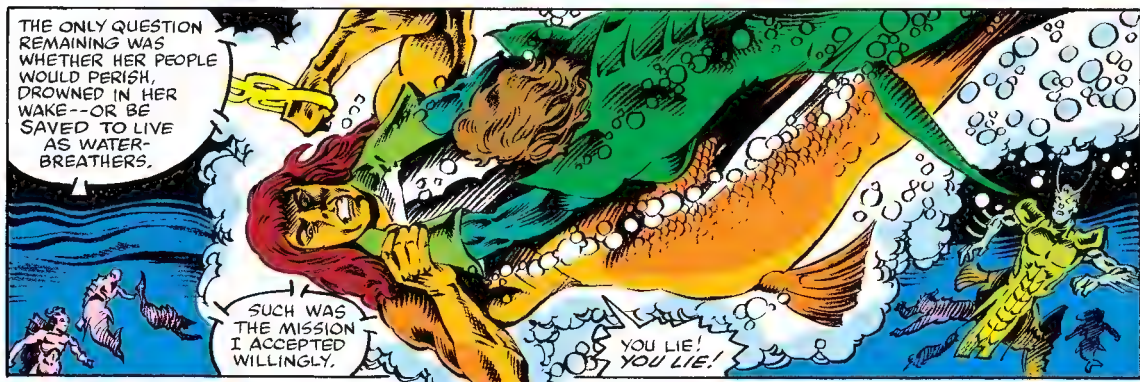
YEAH, BUT INTO 'TAK WHAT?!



HOLY 'TAK! SHREW! MY FEET ARE BE-COMIN' 'TAK FINS!

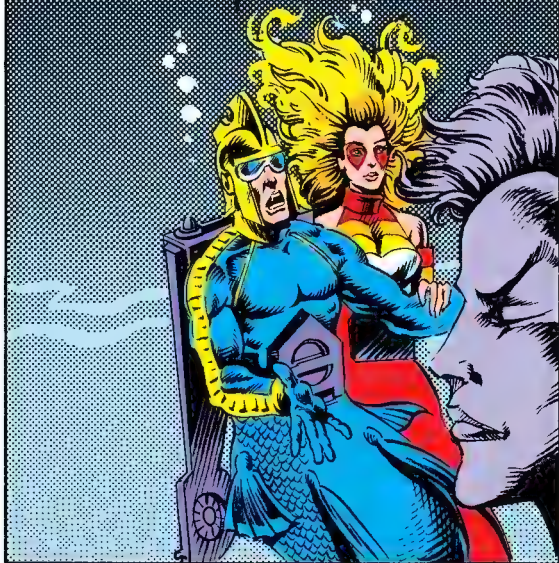
I'M A 'TAK FISH!

... AND HE KNOWS, IN HIS HEART, THAT HE HAS NOT FAILED... THAT THE CORRECT MOMENT IN WHICH TO ACT IS ALWAYS THE MOMENT IN WHICH ONE FINDS HIMSELF ACTING-- THAT HE COULD NOT HAVE EFFECTED THE CHANGE SOONER, FOR FIRST IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ALL OF SEAZONE TO RUSH, WITH OPEN ARMS, TO EMBRACE THE SEA!



YES, AND SAVED THE SAME WAY IN WHICH SEA-ZONE WAS SAVED-- BY BEING TRANSFORMED INTO MER-HUMANS BY THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE EMBODIED IN THE FIRST KEY!

I RECOGNIZED IT THE MOMENT I SAW IT CLASPED TO AQUON'S BUCKLER.



AND, KNOWING THAT IT CAME FROM THE ENIGMA FORCE, I FELT CERTAIN THAT IT COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO ONE WHO WOULD WIELD IT FOR EVIL!



THAT'S AN ARTICLE OF FAITH! IF WE CANNOT BELIEVE IN THE ENIGMA FORCE, THEN WE CANNOT BELIEVE IN ANYTHING!

SO THE GLOWING STRANGER WHO APPEARED TO ME SO MANY YEARS AGO-- WHO TRANSFORMED ME INTO THE FIRST OF THE MER-HUMANS AND INVESTED ME WITH MY MISSION...

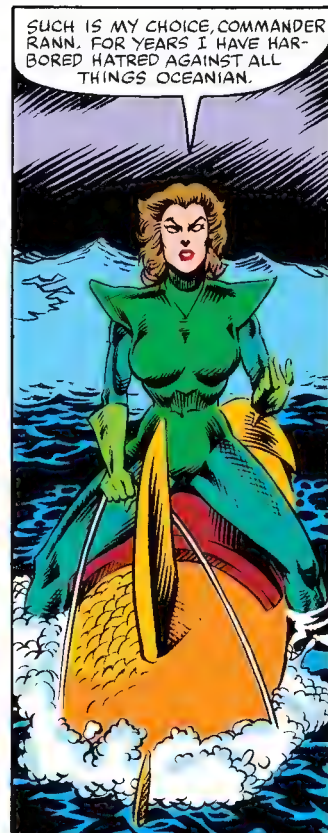
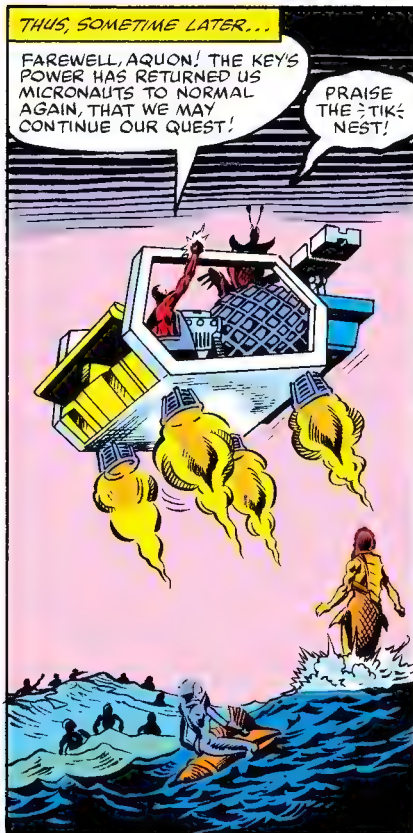


...WAS THIS *TIME TRAVELER* OF WHOM YOU SPEAK! LIKE A GOD HE WAS, THOUGH VERY LIKE A MAN, TOO! HE GAVE ME THE FIRST KEY TO USE TO SAVE MY PEOPLE--



-- BUT I SEE NOW THAT MY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, I AM TO TURN THE KEY OVER TO THE MICRONAUTS THAT ALL THE MICROVERSE MAY BE DELIVERED FROM THE 'TIME OF DARKNESS'!





MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE MICROVERSE, ON A PLAIN OF SPARTAK, THAT COLD STONE WORLD ONCE INHABITED BY THE WARLIKE ACROYEAR RACE...

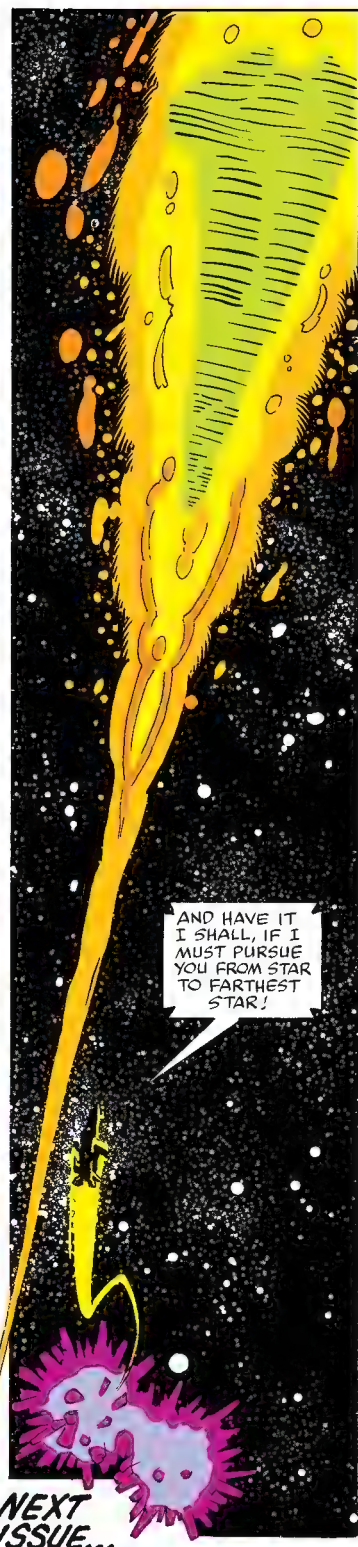


THE HERALD COMET FLASHING THROUGH THE HEAVENS AS IT DID ON THE DAY OF MY BIRTH!

THEN, 'TWAS CAUSE FOR MY PEOPLE TO DECLARE ME KING OF ALL THE ACROYEARS. NOW, 'TIS A SOLEMN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THOSE SAME PEOPLE-- WHO HAVE FLED THIS WORLD WHICH MY ACTIONS DID RENDER LIFELESS-- HAVE BRANDED ME 'TRAITOR'!

I, ACROYEAR, KING OF SPARTAK, AM ALONE-- WITHOUT A PLANET, WITHOUT A PEOPLE! WHY DID YOU CHOOSE **ME** FOR THIS FATE, COMET? WHY DID YOUR CELESTIAL CIRCUMNAVIGATION DOOM **ME** TO A LIFE OF LONELINESS?

I MUST KNOW!
I MUST HAVE AN ANSWER!



AND HAVE IT I SHALL, IF I MUST PURSUE YOU FROM STAR TO FARTHEST STAR!

NEXT ISSUE...

SNOWBLIND
...BE HERE!!!

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS



SNARE OF THE SNOWBEAR!

Somewhere beyond the Spacewall — a barrier in space and time — there exists a subatomic solar system called the Microverse! Teeming with molecular planets and a myriad of races, it has produced heroes minute in size... but mighty beyond measure!

**Stan Lee
PRESENTS:**

THE MICRONAUTS!

A TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS THREATENS THE MICROVERSE! TWO MARKERS--ONE FOUND IN AN EXCAVATED RUIN, THE OTHER IMPRINTED IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS OF COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN, MICRONAUT--HAVE TRIGGERED A SEARCH FOR THREE KEYS THAT MAY HELP LOCATE THE MISSING ENIGMA FORCE BEFORE ITS ABSENCE CAUSES OUR UNIVERSE AND THE MICROVERSE TO VIOLENTLY COLLIDE!

SNOWBLIND

MEANWHILE ON THE MICRO-
VERSIONIAN PLANET HOME-
WORLD, A COLORFULLY-
GARBED FIGURE DRIVES
HIMSELF RELENTLESSLY
ACROSS THE FROZEN
WASTES OF SUBZERO
ZONE.

HE IS PRINCE
PEACOCK OF
THE ICE CITY
POLARIA, AND
TODAY HE HUNTS...
A LEGEND.

COMMANDER
RANN
MARIONETTE
MICROTRON

BUG
ACROYEAR
PHAROID

ALSO APPEARING: DR. STRANGE

BILL MANTLO WRITER **PAT BRODERICK** PENCILS **DAN BULANADI** INKS **SIMEK** - LETTERS **LOUISE JONES** EDITORS **JIM SHOOTER** ED. IN CHIEF
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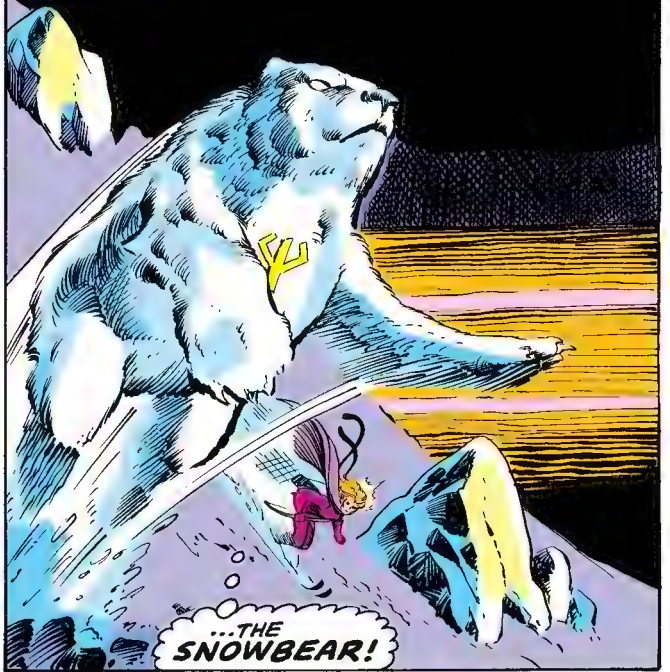
PRINCE PEACOCK'S SKIS ARE OF THE FINEST VINDAWOOD IMPORTED FROM THE ZONE OF TROPICA. MANY CAREFUL HOURS HAVE BEEN DEVOTED TO THEIR CARE AND MAINTENANCE...



AS THEY STREAK ACROSS THE POWDERY SNOWS THEIR SIBILANT SIGHING COULD BE MISTAKEN FOR THE WIND...

ACCEPTING THE SILENCE OF HIS PASSING AS A GIVEN, PEACOCK KNOWS HIS PRECIOUS SKIS WILL NO MORE FAIL HIM THAN THE HAND-HEWN BOW CLENCHED IN HIS GAUNTLETED FIST.

HE WILL NEED UNDILUTED CONFIDENCE IN BOTH IF HE IS TO STALK...



...THE SNOWBEAR!

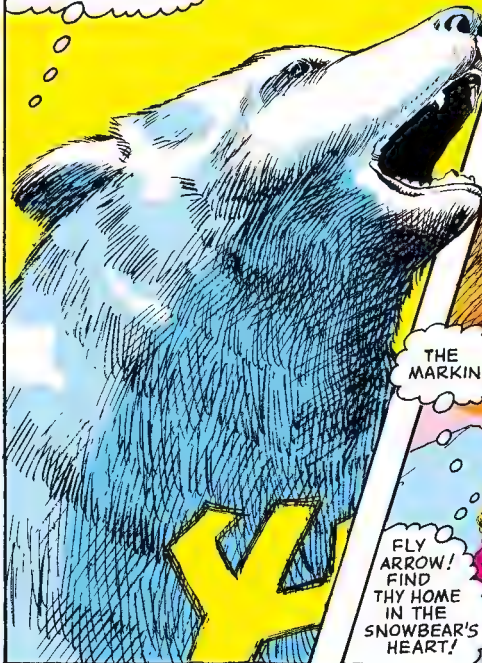
CURSE ME FOR A NOVICE! THE STAR-LIGHT SHINING ON THE SNOW BLINDED ME-- HIDING HER PRESENCE UNTIL I WAS ALMOST UPON HER!



E'EN NOW, THE GLARE DOES CAUSE ME TO STAY MY SHAFT--

--UNTIL I MAY BE SURE THAT THIS CREATURE BEARS THE MARKING UPON HER BREAST WHICH SHALL SEAL HER DOOM!

THE SNOWBEAR REARS AND HOWLS ITS DEFIANCE AND, IN DOING SO, TURNS TOWARDS PEACOCK.



THE MARKING!

FLY ARROW! FIND THY HOME IN THE SNOWBEAR'S HEART!



EVEN AS THE ARROW FLIES, THE SNOWBEAR LUNGES.

ARROO!



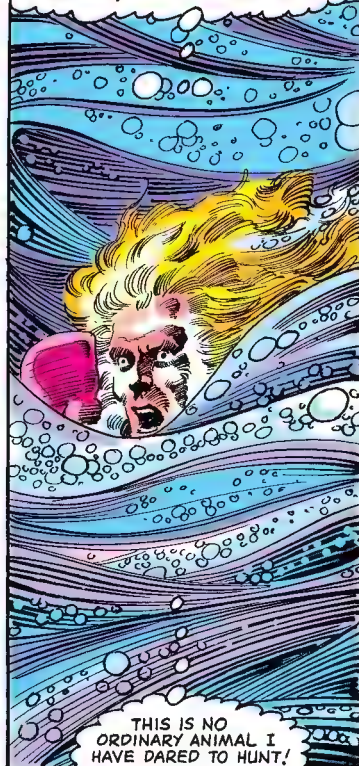
THE BARBED SHAFT WOUNDS, BUT DOES NOT KILL!

HOW COULD I-- THE SUREST ARCHER IN ALL POLARIA-- MISS? I HAD THE MARKING AS A TARGET--!

THERE IS A GLOWING MIST ABOUT THE CREATURE... WHICH DEFLECTS MY ARROWS!



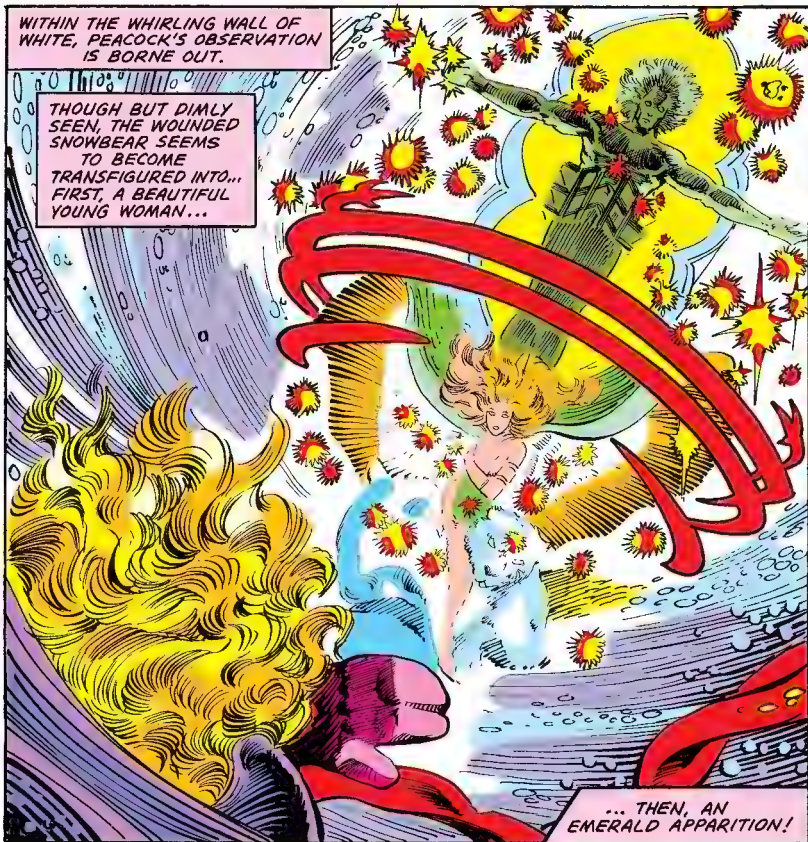
THE MIST IS EXTENDING OUTWARD... SURROUNDING US BOTH WITHIN A SWIRLING, BLINDING BLIZZARD!



THIS IS NO ORDINARY ANIMAL I HAVE DARED TO HUNT!

WITHIN THE WHIRLING WALL OF WHITE, PEACOCK'S OBSERVATION IS BORNE OUT.

THOUGH BUT DIMLY SEEN, THE WOUNDED SNOWBEAR SEEMS TO BECOME TRANSFIGURED INTO... FIRST, A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN...



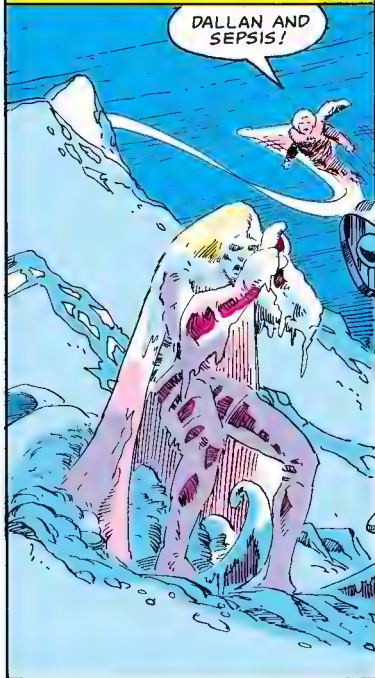
... THEN, AN EMERALD APPARITION!

PEACOCK CANNOT BELIEVE HIS HORRIFIED EYES! HE STANDS TRANSFIXED...



...AND IT IS IN THAT STANCE THAT HE IS DISCOVERED, SOME TIME LATER, BY A YOUNG WOMAN, ANTIGRAVITATIONAL GLIDER WINGS CARRY HER SILENTLY OVER THE SHIMMERING SNOWS. HER NAME IS MARIONETTE, AND SHE IS ONE OF THE VALIANT MICRONAUTS!

DALLAN AND SEPSIS!



A MAN-- COVERED BY ICE AND SNOW! HOW LONG HAS HE STOOD THIS WAY? HOURS? DAYS? YEARS? THIS IS A GRIM PORTENT FOR OUR COMING INTO THIS COUNTRY!



PEACE, MILADY, FOR I HAVE SEEN... WONDERS.

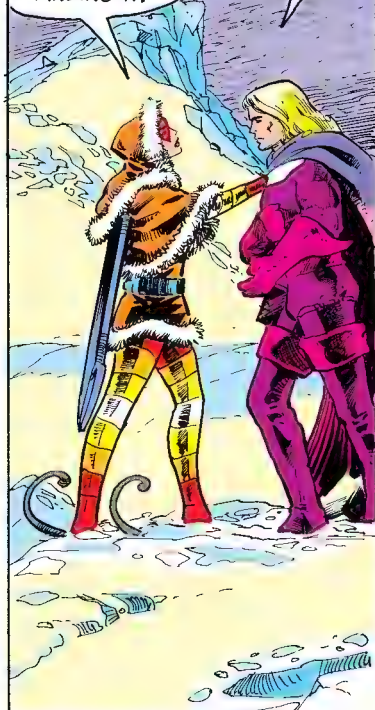
YOU-- YOU'RE ALIVE!

WE POLARIANS... HAVE A REMARKABLE TOLERANCE TOWARDS COLD.



POLARIA? THAT'S THE CITY WE MICRONAUTS SEEK IN OUR QUEST! IS IT FAR? WE'VE HAD NO LUCK FINDING IT!

POLARIA IS CALLED THE CITY IN THE SNOWS, MILADY.



THE SHIFTING SNOWSCAPE ABOUT IT EVER CONSPIRES TO HIDE ITS LOCATION.

YET, THERE IT LIES, ON YONDER PLAIN.

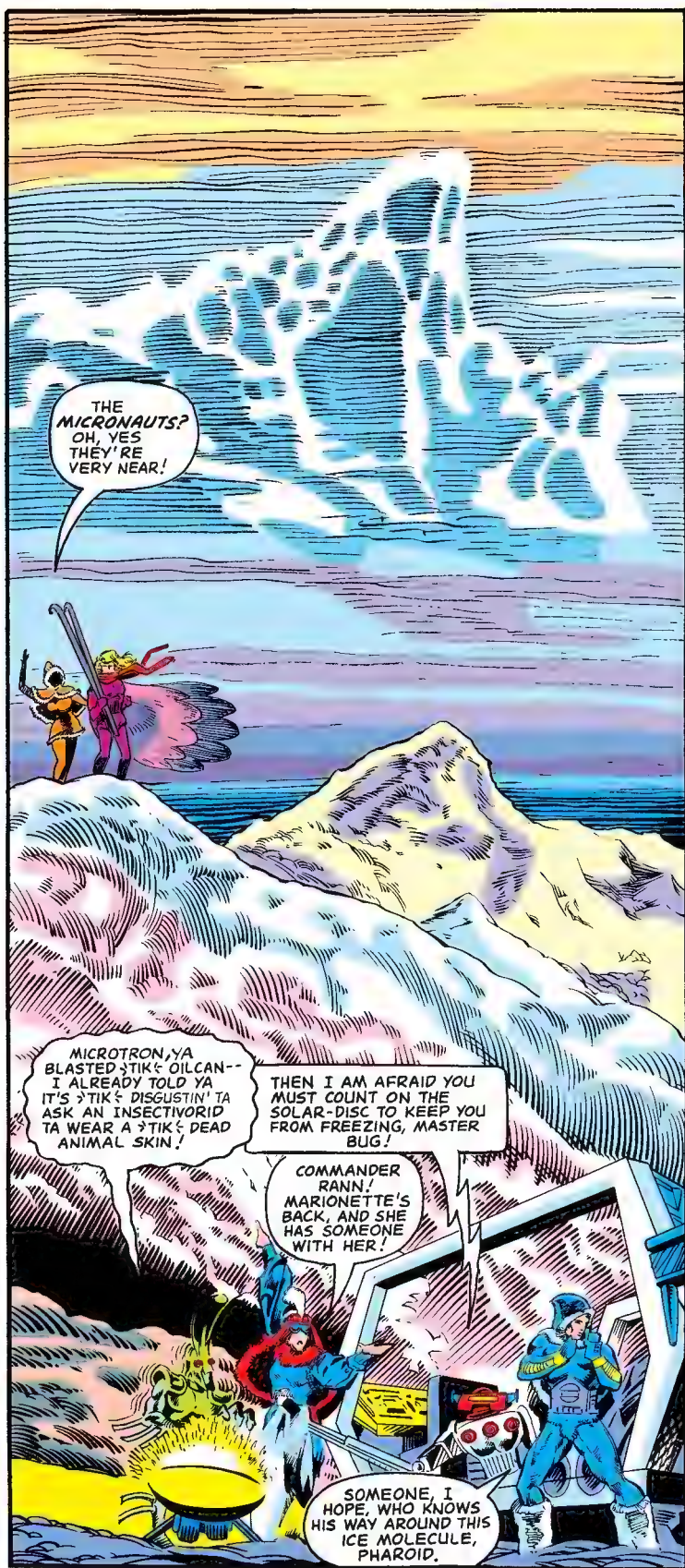


FOLLOWING PEACOCK'S GAZE, MARIONETTE SEES THE SPIRES OF DISTANT POLARIA EMERGE MIRAGELIKE FROM FROZEN MISTS.

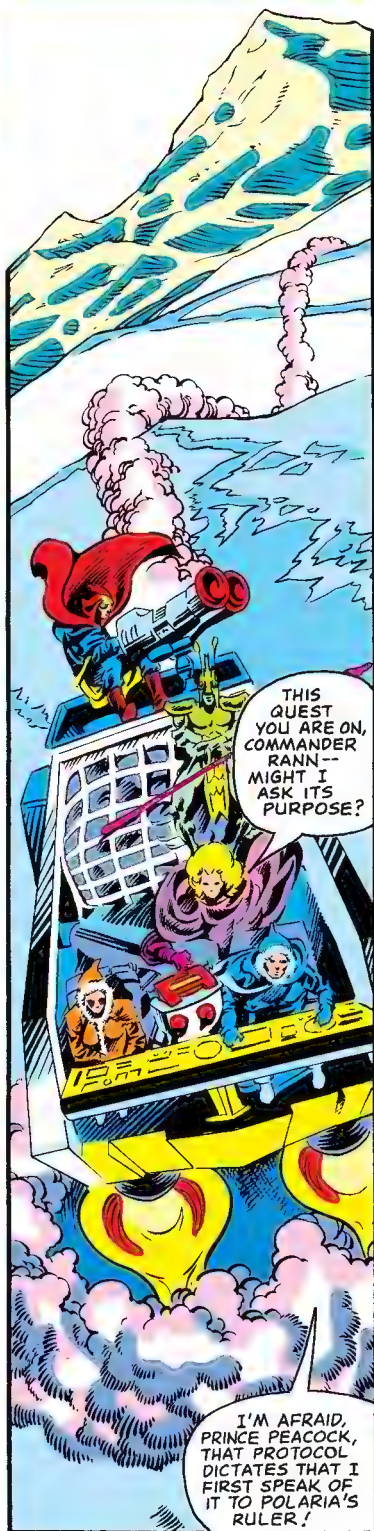
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

YES, BUT YOU SPOKE OF OTHERS ACCOMPANYING YOU IN YOUR QUEST TO SUBZERO ZONE. ARE THEY NEARBY?





PRINCE PEACOCK DOES AND, AFTER INTRODUCTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE 'ROUND THE WARMING SOLAR-DISC, HE CONSENTS TO JOIN THE MICRO-NAUTS ABOARD THEIR ASTRO-STATION AND GUIDE THEM ACROSS THE SNOWSWEEP PLAINS TO POLARIA.

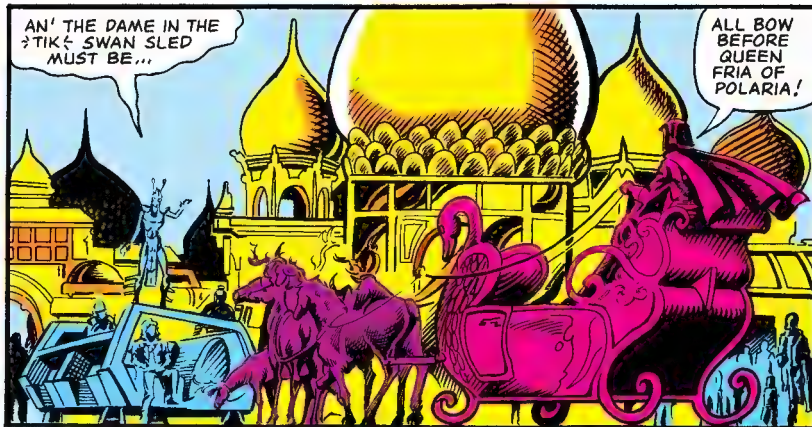


COMMANDER RANN DOES, HOWEVER, PERMIT PRINCE PEACOCK TO USE THE ASTRO-STATION'S COMMUNICATORS TO INFORM THE POLARIANS OF THE MICRONAUTS' IMMINENT ARRIVAL.



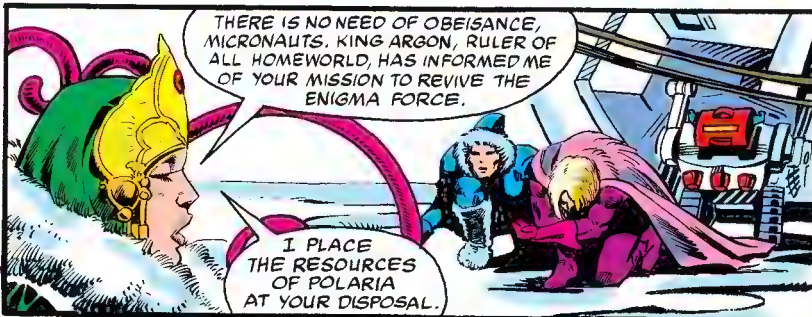
AN! THE DAME IN THE 3TIK SWAN SLED MUST BE...

ALL BOW BEFORE QUEEN FRIA OF POLARIA!



THERE IS NO NEED OF OBEISANCE, MICRONAUTS. KING ARGON, RULER OF ALL HOMEWORLD, HAS INFORMED ME OF YOUR MISSION TO REVIVE THE ENIGMA FORCE.

I PLACE THE RESOURCES OF POLARIA AT YOUR DISPOSAL.



QUEEN FRIA! AS KING ARGON HAS TOLD YOU, THE ENIGMA FORCE PREVENTS THE MICROVERSE FROM EXPANDING AND COLLIDING WITH OTHER UNIVERSES! BUT IT HAS VANISHED! PREDICTING THAT THE FORCE MIGHT BE RECALLED, A PROPHECY SPOKE OF A NEED TO FIND THREE KEYS...

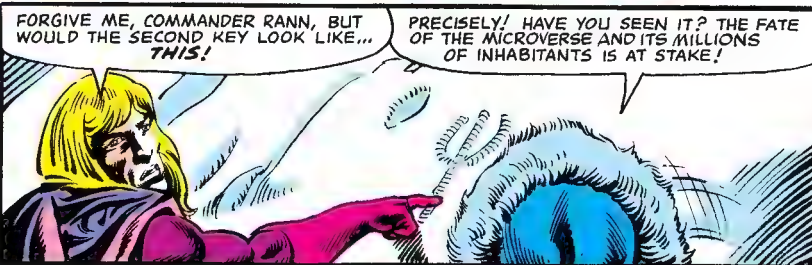
THIS--ACQUIRED IN OCEANIA--IS THE FIRST.

THAT SHAPE!



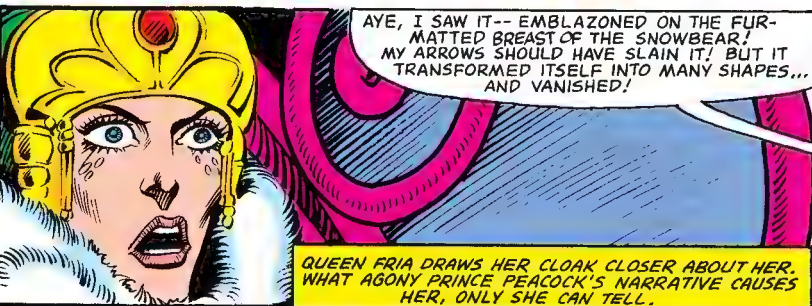
FORGIVE ME, COMMANDER RANN, BUT WOULD THE SECOND KEY LOOK LIKE... THIS!

PRECISELY! HAVE YOU SEEN IT? THE FATE OF THE MICROVERSE AND ITS MILLIONS OF INHABITANTS IS AT STAKE!



AYE, I SAW IT-- EMBLAZONED ON THE FUR-MATTED BREAST OF THE SNOWBEAR! MY ARROWS SHOULD HAVE SLAIN IT! BUT IT TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO MANY SHAPES... AND VANISHED!

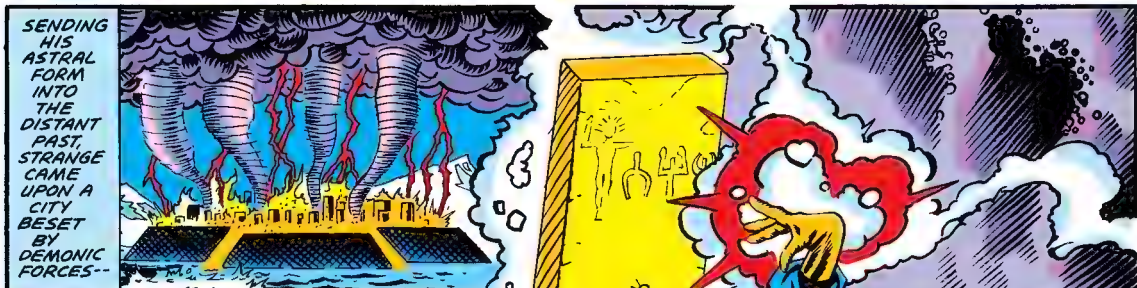
QUEEN FRIA DRAWS HER CLOAK CLOSER ABOUT HER. WHAT AGONY PRINCE PEACOCK'S NARRATIVE CAUSES HER, ONLY SHE CAN TELL.





EARTH--OUR
UNIVERSE--
THE SANCTUM
SANCTORUM
OF DR.
STRANGE!

FOR HOURS, THE MYSTIC
MASTER HAS BEEN TRYING
TO DISCOVER THE ORIGIN
OF AN ANCIENT OBELISK
UNEARTHED RECENTLY
IN INDIA...



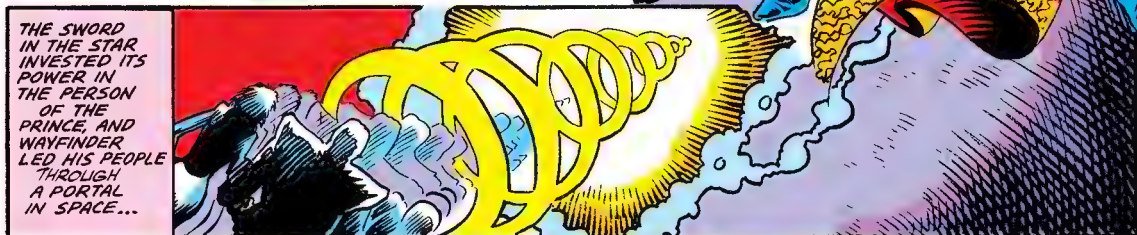
SENDING
HIS
ASTRAL
FORM
INTO
THE
DISTANT
PAST,
STRANGE
CAME
UPON A
CITY
BESET
BY
DEMONIC
FORCES--



--A CITY
RULED
BY THE
BLIND
PRINCE
WAYFINDER,
WHO
SOUGHT
COUNSEL
FROM A
SENTIENT
SWORD
EMBEDDED
IN A
GLOWING
STAR!



INFORMING
THE
INHABITANTS
OF
THE
CITY
THAT
THEIR
ONLY
HOPE
LAY
IN
FLIGHT...



THE SWORD
IN THE STAR
INVESTED ITS
POWER IN
THE PERSON
OF THE
PRINCE, AND
WAYFINDER
LED HIS PEOPLE
THROUGH
A PORTAL
IN SPACE...



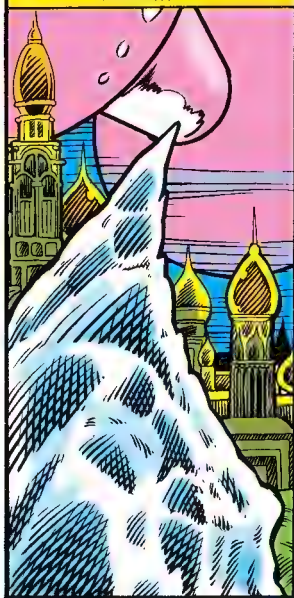
THE SPACEWALL--

--A BARRIER
BETWEEN OUR SOLAR
SYSTEM AND A SMALLER,
SUBATOMIC MICROVERSE!

WAYFINDER
BREACHED IT--
AND SO MUST I
IF I'M TO
LEARN MORE!

CASTING
A SIMPLE
SPELL,
DR. STRANGE
FADES FROM
SIGHT!

MEANWHILE, IN THE MICRO-VERSE, THE LONG POLARIA NIGHT CONTINUES ON HOMEWORLD'S SUBZERO ZONE...

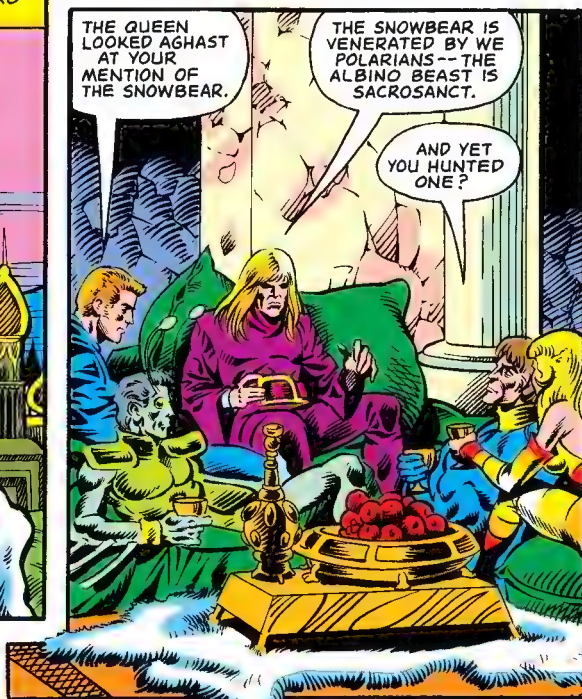


IN QUEEN FRIA'S PALACE THE MICRONAUTS PLY PRINCE PEACOCK WITH QUESTIONS...

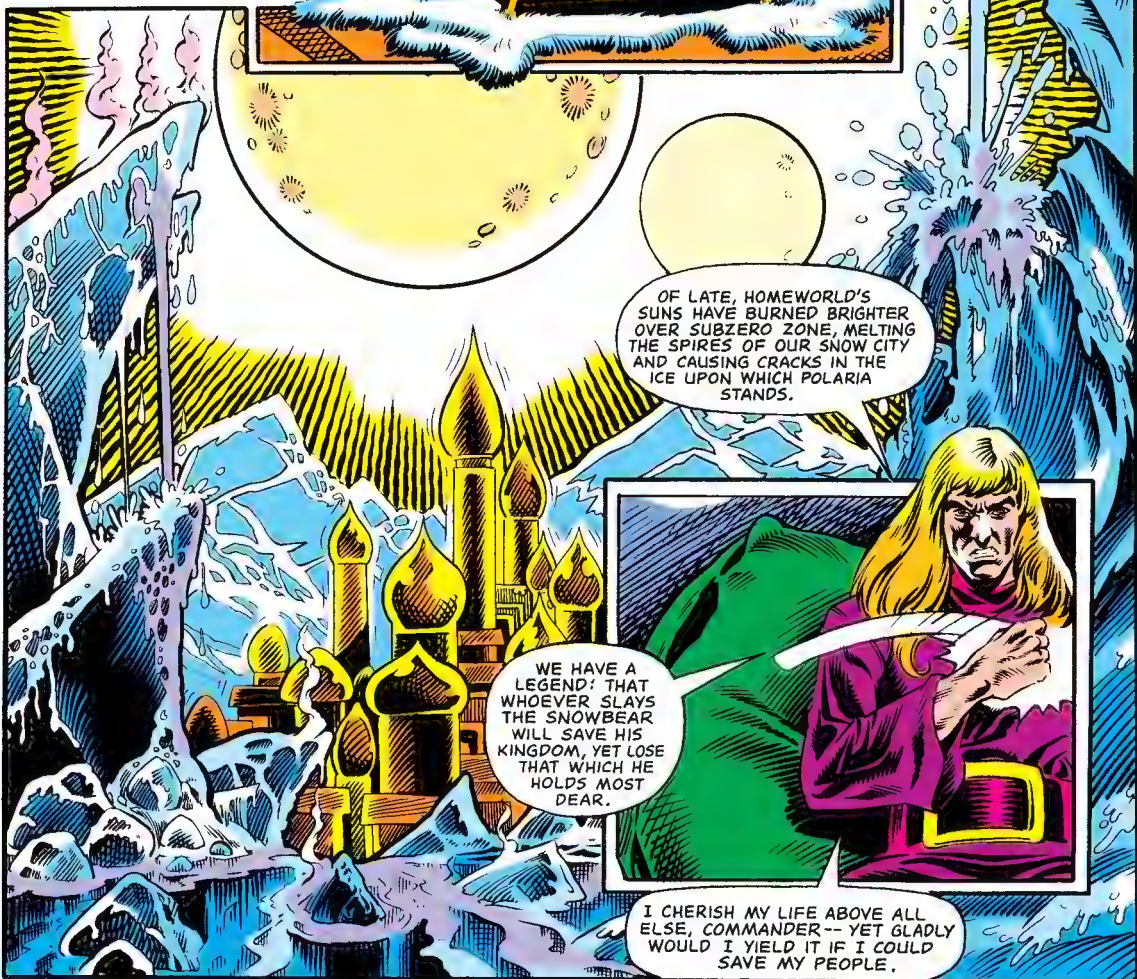
THE QUEEN LOOKED AGHAST AT YOUR MENTION OF THE SNOWBEAR.

THE SNOWBEAR IS VENERATED BY WE POLARIANS--THE ALBINO BEAST IS SACROSANCT.

AND YET YOU HUNTED ONE?



COMMANDER RANN... POLARIA HAS FALLEN ON TROUBLED TIMES.



OF LATE, HOMEWORLD'S SUNS HAVE BURNED BRIGHTER OVER SUBZERO ZONE, MELTING THE SPIRES OF OUR SNOW CITY AND CAUSING CRACKS IN THE ICE UPON WHICH POLARIA STANDS.

WE HAVE A LEGEND: THAT WHOEVER SLAYS THE SNOWBEAR WILL SAVE HIS KINGDOM, YET LOSE THAT WHICH HE HOLDS MOST DEAR.

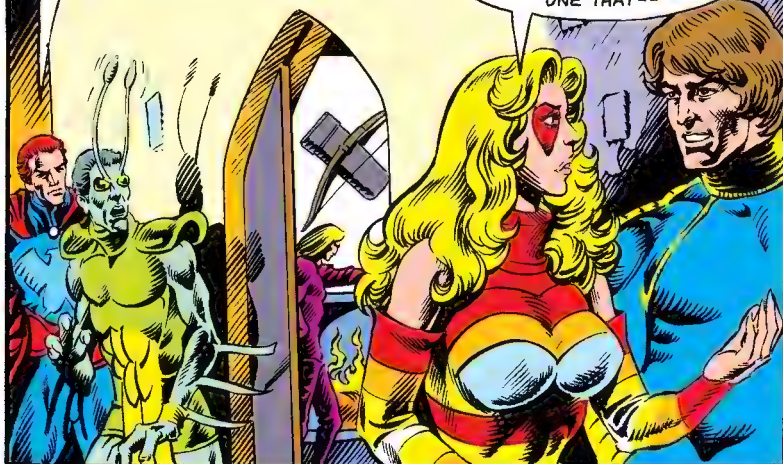
I CHERISH MY LIFE ABOVE ALL ELSE, COMMANDER--YET GLADLY WOULD I YIELD IT IF I COULD SAVE MY PEOPLE.

HAVING DINED, THE MICRONAUTS PLAN TO ACCOMPANY PRINCE PEACOCK ON THE NEXT DAY'S HUNT...

THE SNOWBEAR AND THE SECOND KEY TO THE ENIGMA FORCE MUST BE LINKED -- THE MARKING PRINCE PEACOCK SAW ON THE BEAST'S BREAST SUGGESTS AS MUCH.

I NOW UNDERSTAND WHY QUEEN FRIA LOOKED SHOCKED WHEN PEACOCK MENTIONED HIS HUNT. HE'S WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIS LIFE, AND IT'S OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE THAT --

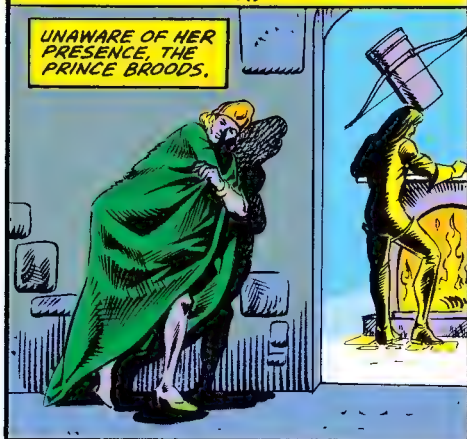
-- SHE LOVES HIM!



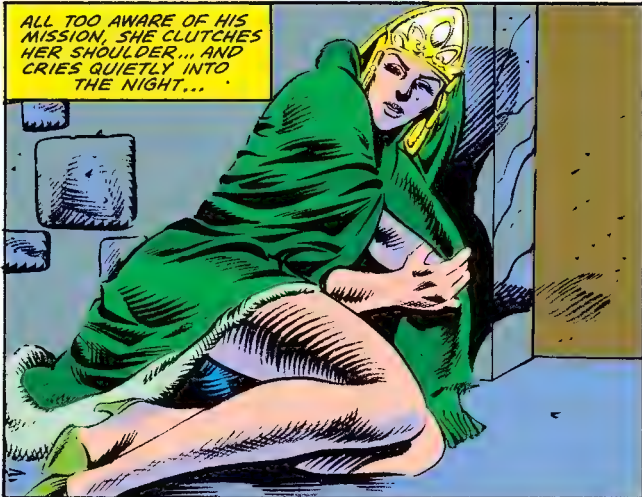
NOT WISHING TO BE SEEN SKULKING LIKE A SPY IN HER OWN PALACE, QUEEN FRIA WAITS UNTIL THE MICRONAUTS HAVE RETIRED TO THEIR CHAMBERS...

THEN SHE SLUMPS DOWN ON THE COLD STONE FLOOR OUTSIDE PRINCE PEACOCK'S DOOR.

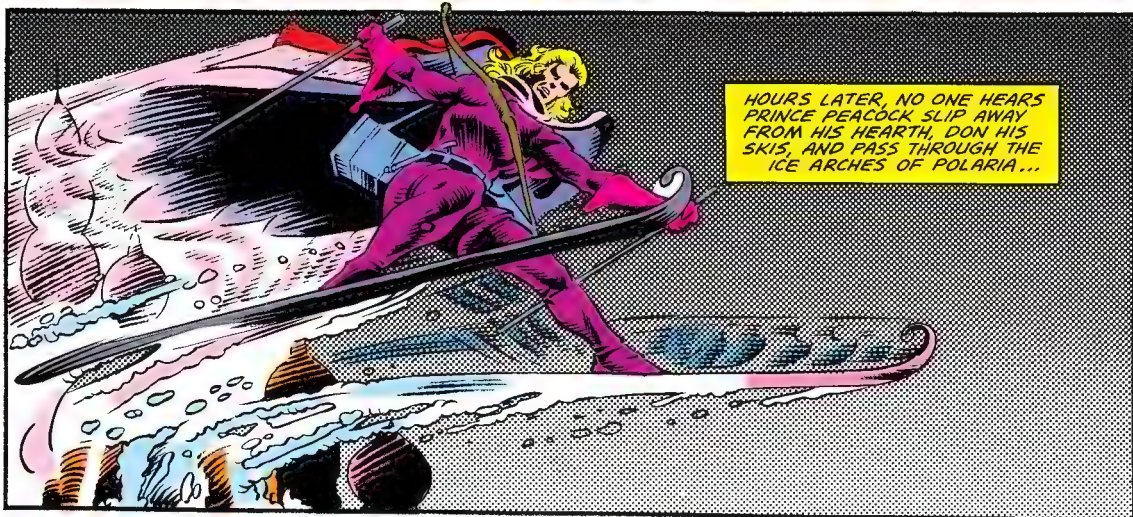
UNAWARE OF HER PRESENCE, THE PRINCE BROODS.

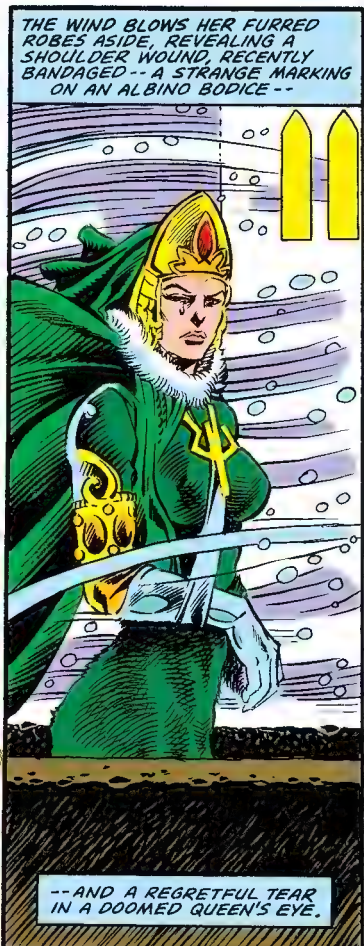
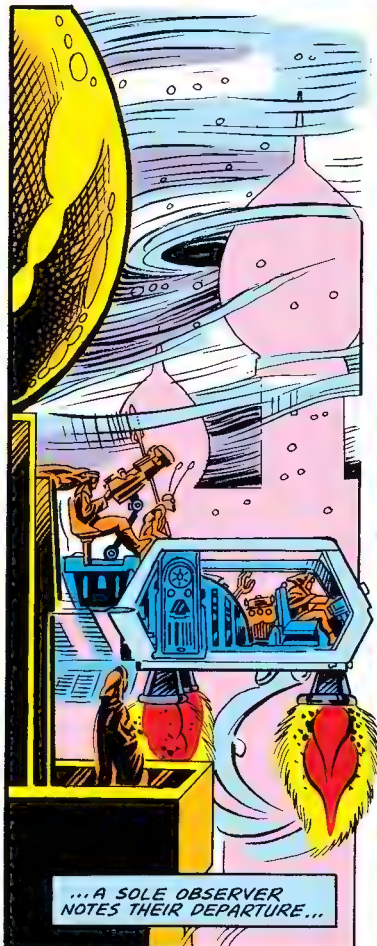
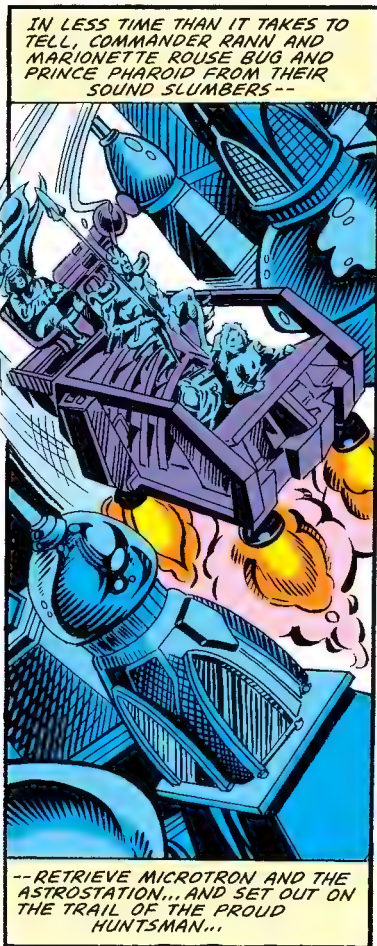


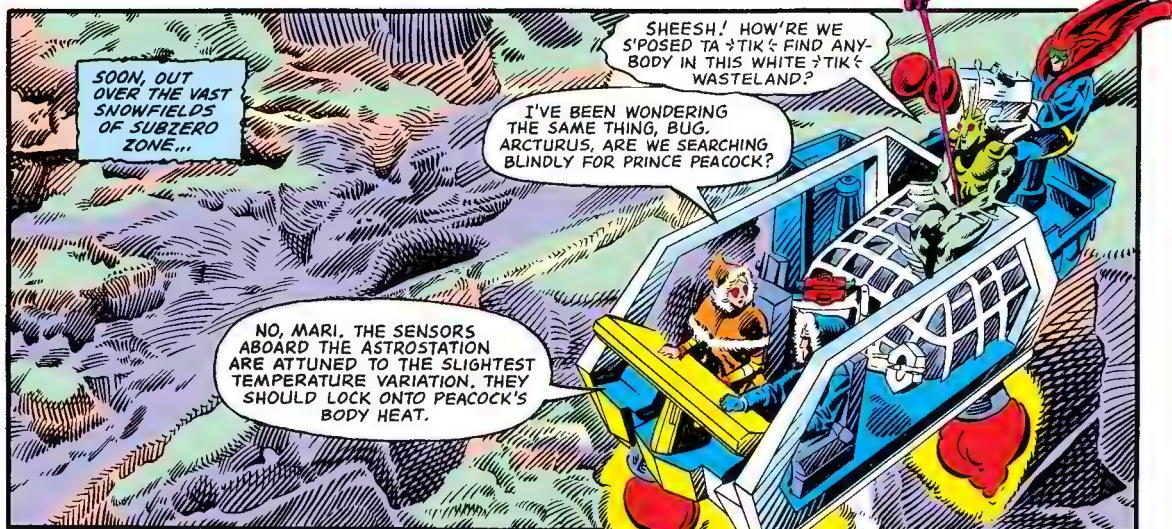
ALL TOO AWARE OF HIS MISSION, SHE CLUTCHES HER SHOULDER... AND CRIES QUIETLY INTO THE NIGHT...



HOURS LATER, NO ONE HEARS PRINCE PEACOCK SLIP AWAY FROM HIS HEARTH, DON HIS SKIS, AND PASS THROUGH THE ICE ARCHES OF POLARIA...







SOON, OUT OVER THE VAST SNOWFIELDS OF SUBZERO ZONE...

SHEESH! HOW'RE WE S'POSED TA 3TIK 4 FIND ANYBODY IN THIS WHITE 3TIK 4 WASTELAND?

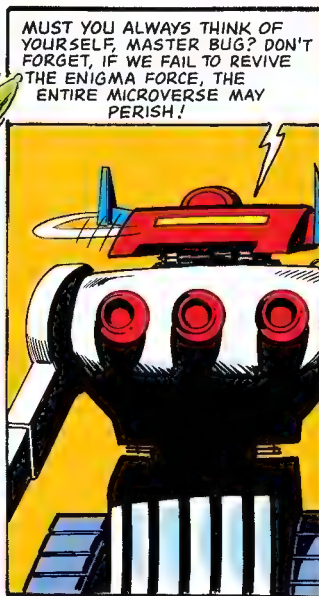
I'VE BEEN WONDERING THE SAME THING, BUG. ARCTURUS, ARE WE SEARCHING BLINDLY FOR PRINCE PEACOCK?

NO, MARI. THE SENSORS ABOARD THE ASTROSTATION ARE ATTUNED TO THE SLIGHTEST TEMPERATURE VARIATION. THEY SHOULD LOCK ONTO PEACOCK'S BODY HEAT.



Y'KNOW, THIS QUEST AIN'T WHAT IT'S 3TIK 4 CRACKED UP TA BE! FIRST, WATER-- AN' NOW, COLD!

AIN'T THERE ANY PLACE 3TIK 4 TROPICAL ON THIS PLANET?



MUST YOU ALWAYS THINK OF YOURSELF, MASTER BUG? DON'T FORGET, IF WE FAIL TO REVIVE THE ENIGMA FORCE, THE ENTIRE MICROVERSE MAY PERISH!

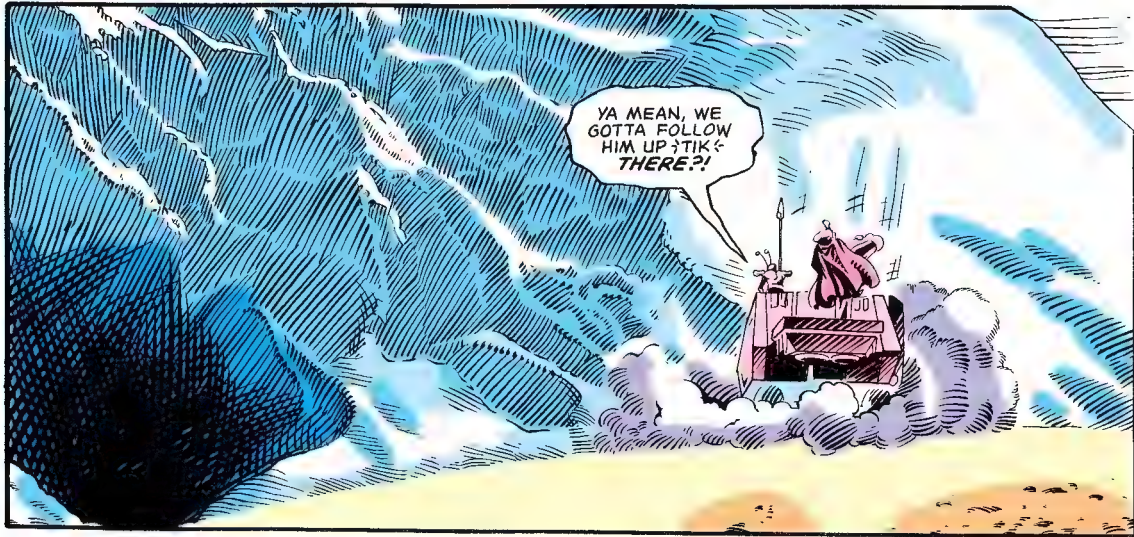


AT THAT MOMENT...

VEEEP

GET READY, MICRONAUTS!

WE'VE PINPOINTED PRINCE PEACOCK!



YA MEAN, WE GOTTA FOLLOW HIM UP 3TIK 4 THERE?!

DISSEMBARKING FROM THE ASTROSTATION, THE COURAGEOUS MICRONAUTS STAND SPELLBOUND BEFORE THE SNOWCAPPED MASS OF ICE AND STONE--THE MOUNTAINS OF SUBZERO ZONE!

OH, DEAR! I DO SO DETEST HEIGHTS!

HAVE YOU SIGHTED PEACOCK WITH THE OPTISCANNER, MARI?

NOT YET, ARCTURUS. I...



THERE! ON A LEDGE SO NARROW IT SCARCELY SEEMS ABLE TO SUPPORT A MAN'S WEIGHT!

PRINCE PEACOCK IS STALKING SOMETHING ON A DISTANT PEAK.



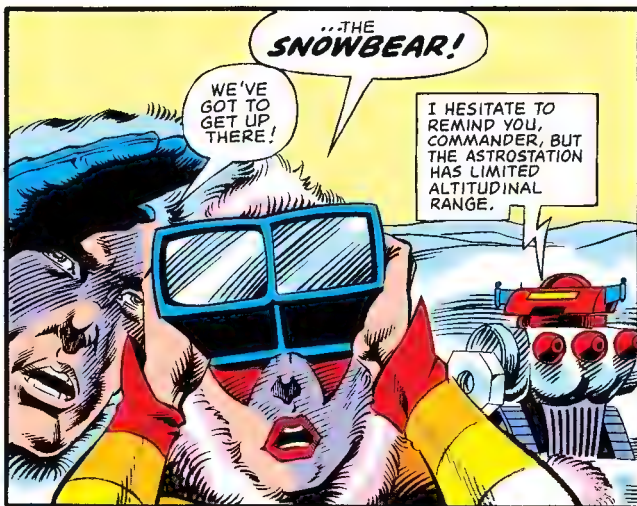
ADJUSTING THE OPTISCANNER'S DEPTH-OF-FIELD, MARIONETTE SPIES...



...THE SNOWBEAR!

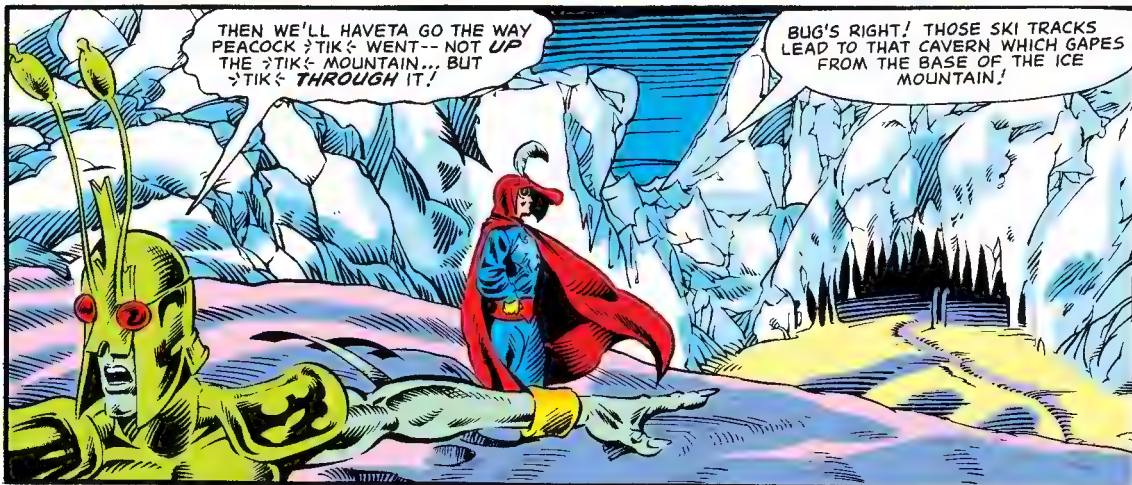
WE'VE GOT TO GET UP THERE!

I HESITATE TO REMIND YOU, COMMANDER, BUT THE ASTROSTATION HAS LIMITED ALTITUDINAL RANGE.



THEN WE'LL HAVETA GO THE WAY PEACOCK >TIK< WENT-- NOT UP THE >TIK< MOUNTAIN... BUT >TIK< THROUGH IT!

BUG'S RIGHT! THOSE SKI TRACKS LEAD TO THAT CAVERN WHICH GAPES FROM THE BASE OF THE ICE MOUNTAIN!





PEACOCK'S
TRACKS LEAD
INSIDE!

LOOK-- HIS SKIS! HE
TOLD US HOW MUCH HE PRIZES THEM!



COMMANDER, I HAVE
A FEELING THAT
SOMETHING BAD IS--!

NOW WHO'S
HESITATIN'
WHEN THE 3TIK <
FATE O' THE
MICROVERSE IS
AT 3TIK < STAKE?!

IT'S JUST
THAT...



SUDDENLY, THE JAGGED STALACTITES
HUNGRILY CLOSE OVER THE CAVE
MOUTH--

AN AVA-
LANCHE!

THE LOYAL MICROTRON IS SEALED OUT.

HIS FELLOW MICRO-
NAUTS ARE SEALED
IN.



LORD,
WHAT 3TIK <
GHOULS
THESE
PORTALS
BE!



CAN YOUR *STAR
SCEPTER* SHED
ANY LIGHT ON OUR
PREDICAMENT,
PRINCE PHAROID?

IT'S POWERED BY THE FIERCE
SOLAR RAYS WHICH SHINES
ETERNALLY DOWN ON MY
DESERT KINGDOM OF
AEGYPTA, COMMANDER
RANN.

UNFORTUNATELY I HAVE BEEN
SO LONG AWAY FROM SAND-
ZONE THAT ITS CHARGE IS
FEEBLE. IT CAN
ILLUMINATE-- BUT NOT
MELT THROUGH THE
ICE TO FREEDOM.

LEMME
TAKE A 3TIK <
CRACK AT IT
WITH MY 3TIK <
ROCKET-LANCE!



NO, BUG. WE'RE JUST WASTING TIME.
MICROTRON KNOWS TO STAND GUARD
OVER THE ASTROSTATION. OUR TASK
IS TO FOLLOW PRINCE PEACOCK.

LOOSENING HIS LASERSONIC PISTOL
IN ITS HOLSTER, COMMANDER RANN
LEADS HIS MICRONAUTS INTO THE
DIM VASTNESS OF THE ICE CAVERN.

THEY GO UP, FOR THERE IS NO OTHER DIRECTION PRINCE PEACOCK COULD HAVE TAKEN BEFORE THEM.



THEY GO INTO DANGER UNHEEDING OF THEIR OWN SAFETY--WILLING TO GIVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR WORLD! AND I--I AM NO TRUE MICRONAUT-- BUT A TRAITOR IN THEIR MIDST.



YOU SEE ANYTHING UP AHEAD, BUG? ANY SIGN THAT WE'RE COMING OUT INTO THE LIGHT?

LIGHT-- NO-- BUT SOMETHIN', YEAH! CAN'T SEE IT CLEARLY 'TIK BUT IT'S BIG, UGLY, AN' 'TIK FLYIN' THIS WAY!



IT'S 'TIK GOT ME, 'NAUTS! CAN'T BREAK ITS GRIP!



ARCTURUS, WE'VE GOT TO SHOOT THAT THING DOWN!

IF YOU DO, BUG WILL FALL TO THE JAGGED ICE BELOW!



THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO! WE'VE GOT TO GO ON! BUG WILL HAVE TO FIGHT FREE OF THE CAVE-BAT ON HIS OWN!

SOON, THE DARKNESS OF THE CAVERN BEGINS TO BE DISPLACED BY A COLD BLUE LIGHT STREAMING DOWN THROUGH THE MISTS ENVELOPING SUBZERO ZONE, AND THE MICRO-NAUTS FIND THEMSELVES...

OUT! AND THERE, ON THAT PEAK BEFORE US-- PRINCE PEACOCK!

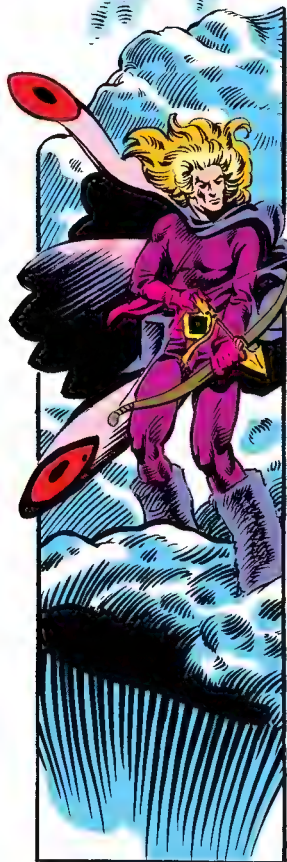
HE MUST SEE THE SNOW-BEAR!

CREATURE! THERE IS NO SUPERNATURAL MIST PROTECTING YOU FROM MY ARROWS NOW... AND THERE IS NO WAY THAT I, PRINCE PEACOCK, SHALL MISS!

TETHERED TO THE FEATHERED SHAFT IS A LINE OF TENSILE PLANDANIUM, A STEEL-LIKE METAL MINED IN HOMEWORLD'S INDUSTRIAL ZONE.

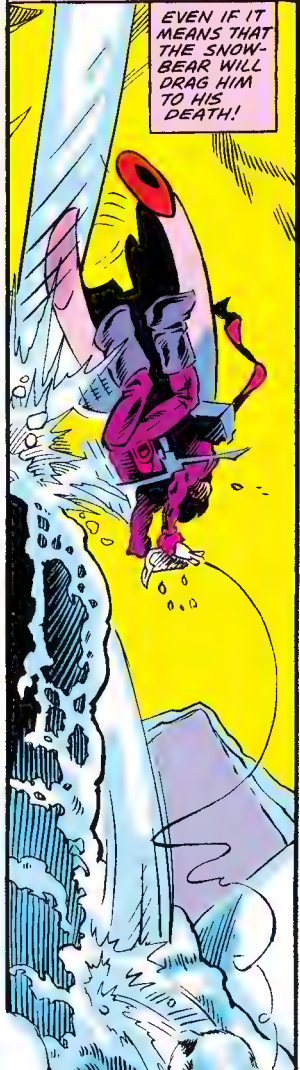
IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT ANY CREATURE OF FLESH AND BLOOD COULD BREAK SUCH A LINE--AND PRINCE PEACOCK HAS NO INTENTION OF LETTING IT GO...

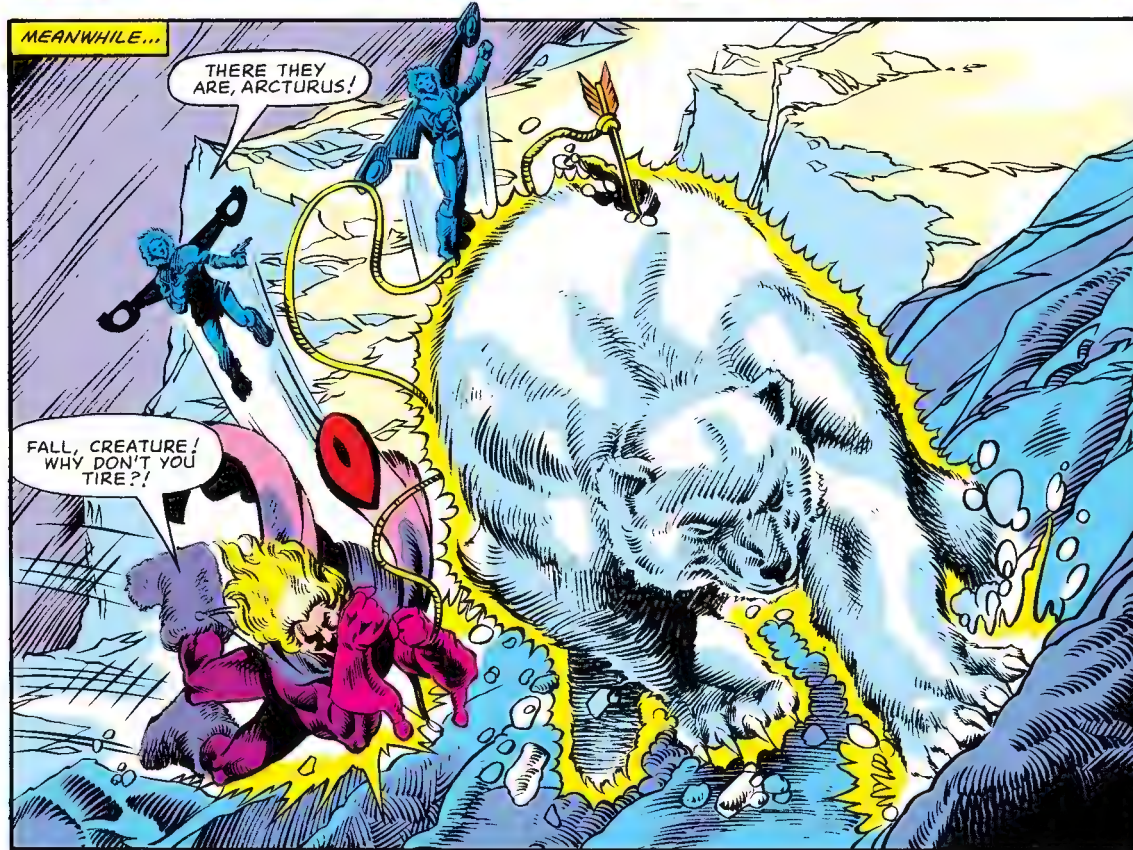
EVEN IF IT MEANS THAT THE SNOW-BEAR WILL DRAG HIM TO HIS DEATH!



ROWR

NOR IS THERE ANY CHANCE THAT I SHALL LOSE THEE AMIDST THESE SNOWCLAD PEAKS!

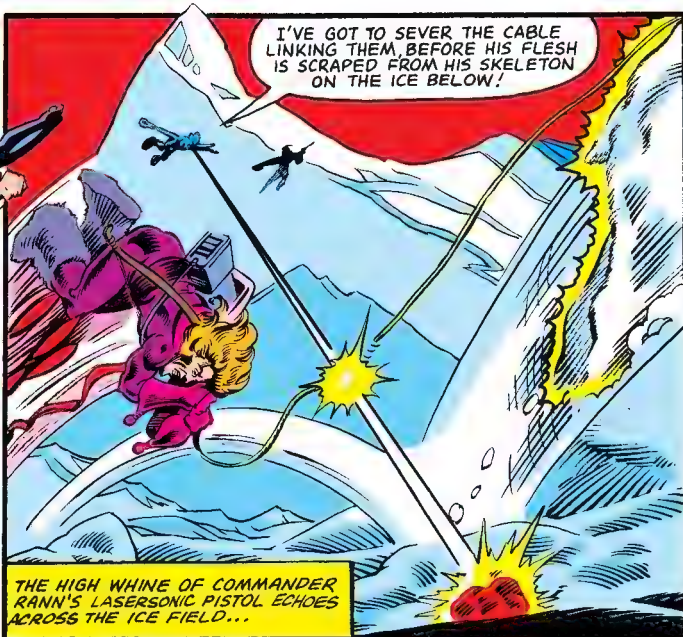




ARCTURUS, THE SNOWBEAR-- THE MARKING ON ITS BREAST IS IN THE SHAPE OF THE SECOND KEY TO THE ENIGMA FORCE!



NO TIME FOR THAT NOW, MARI! THE BEAST IS KILLING PEACOCK!



I'VE GOT TO SEVER THE CABLE LINKING THEM, BEFORE HIS FLESH IS SCRAPED FROM HIS SKELETON ON THE ICE BELOW!

THE HIGH WHINE OF COMMANDER RANN'S LASERSONIC PISTOL ECHOES ACROSS THE ICE FIELD...

... AND HUNTER AND PREY ARE LINKED NO MORE!

PRINCE PEACOCK, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



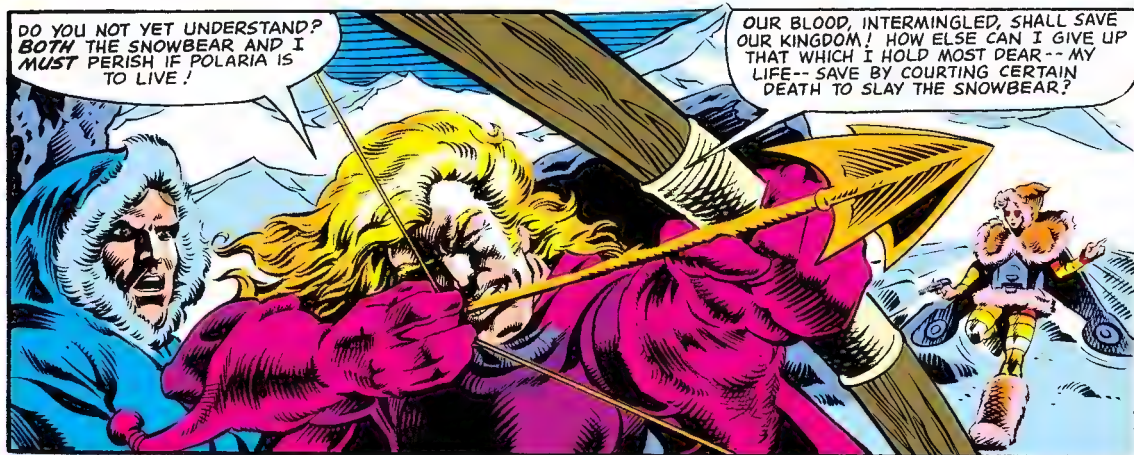
IF COMMANDER RANN EXPECTS GRATITUDE FOR SAVING THE POLARIAN'S LIFE, HE IS IN FOR A SURPRISE...

CURSE YOU, WARM-WORLDER! THE BEAST WAS IN PAIN FROM MY ARROW-- LOSING BLOOD! I WANTED TO TIRE HER WITH MY WEIGHT!



FROM WHERE I FLEW, IT LOOKED LIKE A TOSS-UP AS TO WHICH OF YOU WOULD GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FIRST!

DO YOU NOT YET UNDERSTAND? BOTH THE SNOWBEAR AND I MUST PERISH IF POLARIA IS TO LIVE!



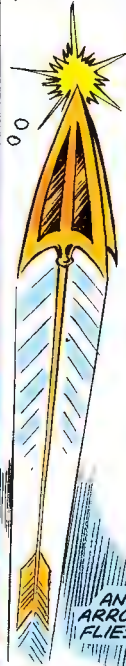
OUR BLOOD, INTERMINGLED, SHALL SAVE OUR KINGDOM! HOW ELSE CAN I GIVE UP THAT WHICH I HOLD MOST DEAR-- MY LIFE-- SAVE BY COURTING CERTAIN DEATH TO SLAY THE SNOWBEAR?

MARIONETTE, WHO LANDS SILENTLY BEHIND THE INTREPID HUNTS-MAN, HAS BEEN WONDERING THE SAME THING.

IS HIS LIFE THE THING WHICH PRINCE PEACOCK CHERISHES ABOVE ALL ELSE?

"THESE POLARIANS SEEM SO COLD-- SO EMOTIONLESS-- AND YET I SENSED SOMETHING AKIN TO LOVE BETWEEN PEACOCK AND QUEEN FRIA!"

... AND, TIRED OF TRYING TO AVOID ITS FATE, THE CREATURE TURNS AND WELCOMES DEATH...



AN ARROW FLIES...



... THE SNOWBEAR SCREAMS...



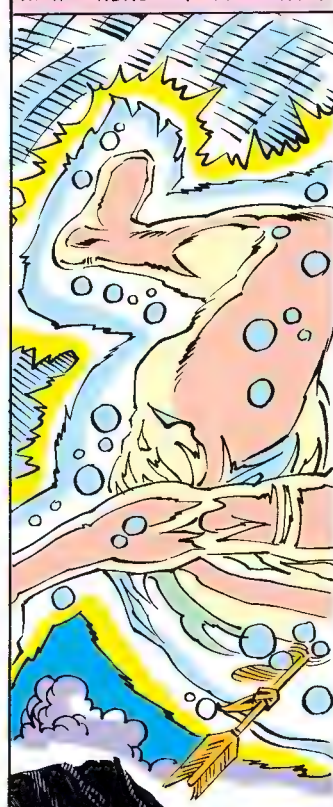
...AND FALLS.

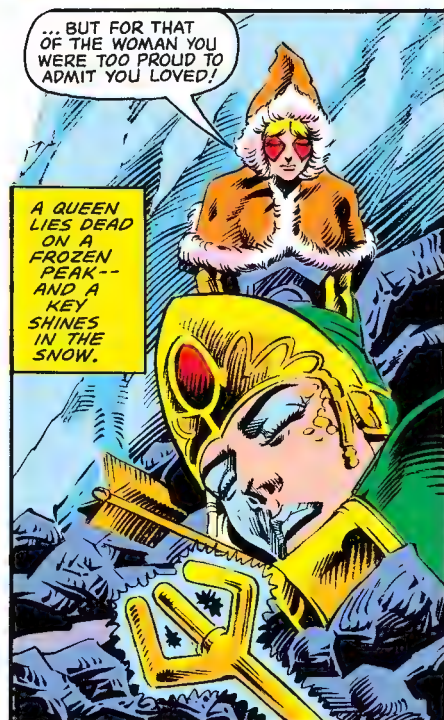
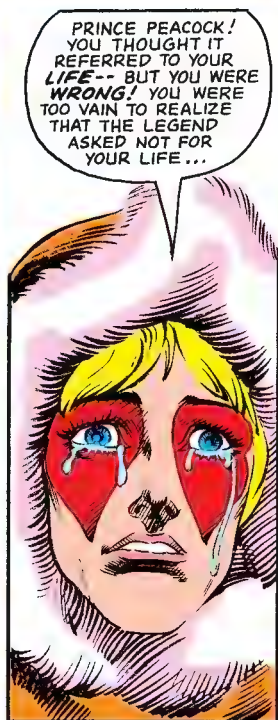


THEN, WITH ITS DYING BREATH...



...THE SNOWBEAR TRANSFORMS...

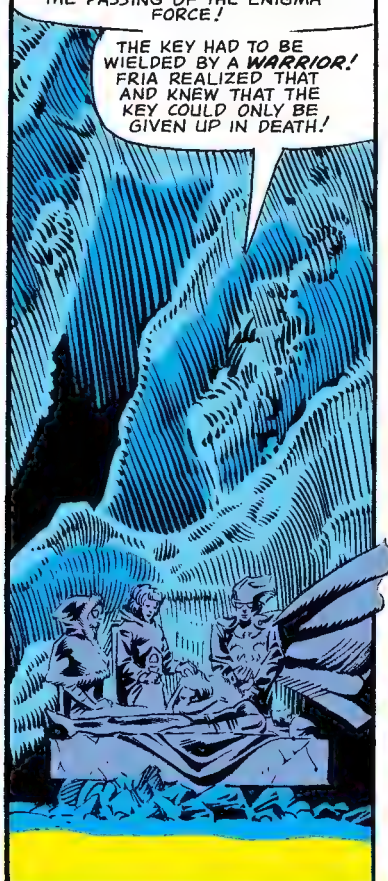




LATER, HAVING HEWN A BIER OUT OF ICE WITH THEIR LASERSONICS, THE MICRONAUTS JOIN PRINCE PEACOCK AROUND THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF QUEEN FRIA OF POLARIA.

ALAS, TOO LATE, I SEE THE TRUTH! FRIA WAS THE HEART AND SOUL OF POLARIA--AND YET SHE WAS TOO GENTLE TO WIELD THE KEY GIVEN HER TO AVERT THE "GREAT DISTRESS" BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE PASSING OF THE ENIGMA FORCE!

THE KEY HAD TO BE WIELDED BY A WARRIOR! FRIA REALIZED THAT AND KNEW THAT THE KEY COULD ONLY BE GIVEN UP IN DEATH!



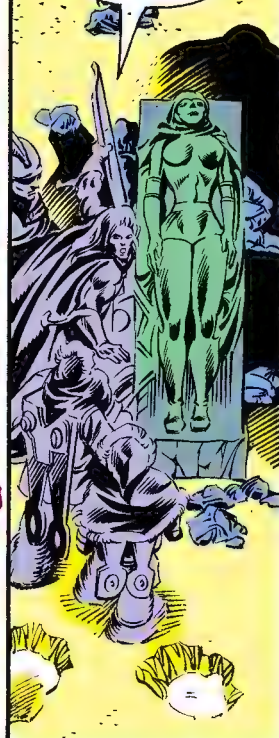
SHE PRAYED THAT A GREAT WARRIOR WOULD PAY HEED TO THE LEGEND SHE WOVE, AND SLAY HER, THUS GAINING THE POWER TO SAVE HER PEOPLE!

SHE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT THE WARRIOR WHO WOULD COME... WOULD BE YOU, PEACOCK-- THE MAN SHE SECRETLY LOVED.



HAD SHE BUT TOLD ME, PERHAPS ANOTHER WAY COULD HAVE BEEN FOUND! BUT THIS ACCURSED KINGDOM HAS MADE ALL POLARIANS AS COLD AS ICE-- AS DISTANT FROM EACH OTHER AS THE TWIN SUNS OF HOMEWORLD ARE FROM SUBZERO ZONE! THAT IS WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT FRIA'S DEATH, MICRONAUTS--AND THAT ALONE!

TAKE THE KEY, FOR I WILL NOT! LET THE SUNS BLAZE DOWN! LET THEM MELT THE ICE AND SNOW.



WE OF POLARIA HAVE GROWN TOO COLD, INDEED, IF WE WOULD SACRIFICE THE DESIRES OF OUR HEARTS--

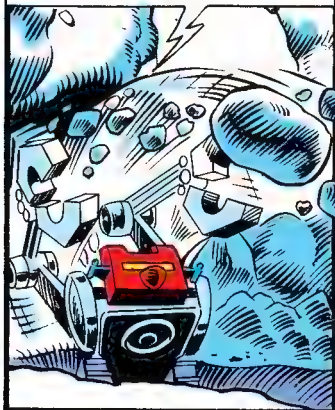


-- FOR MERE EXISTENCE.



MEANWHILE, THOUGH THE EFFORT HAS STRAINED HIS CAPACITATORS NEARLY TO EXHAUSTION, THE LITTLE ROBOID NAMED MICROTRON HAS CONTINUED TO DIG THROUGH THE ICE AND SNOW IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNCOVER HIS FRIENDS!

THIS IS TERRIBLE! HOW CAN I GO BACK TO KING ARGON AND TELL HIM THAT THE MICRONAUTS ARE DEAD-- THAT THE QUEST HAS FAILED?



SUDDENLY...

THE ICE WALL-- IT'S MELTING FROM WITHIN?!



HELLO, MICROTRON. I HOPE WE DIDN'T WORRY YOU.

TWO KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE CLENCHED IN HIS HAND, COMMANDER RANN GENERATES THE HEAT NECESSARY TO FREE THE MICRONAUTS FROM THE FROZEN CAVERN.

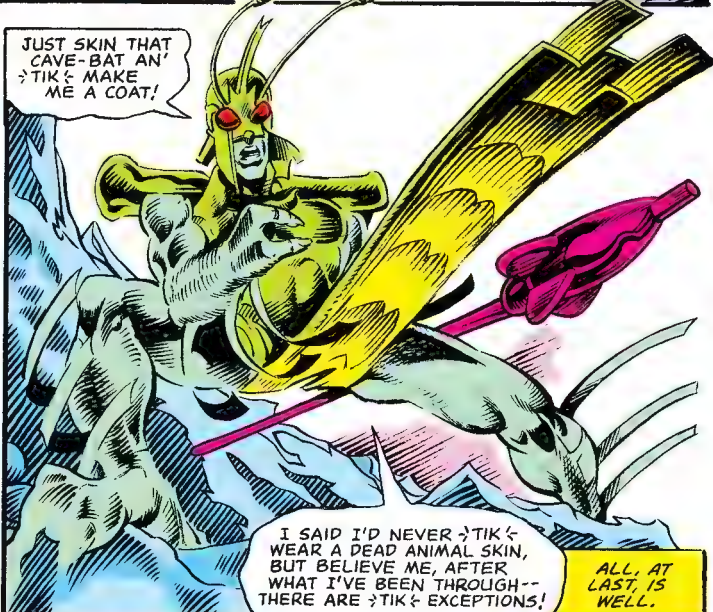


YOU'VE GOT THE SECOND KEY! BUT, WHERE'S MASTER BUG? OH, NO! DON'T TELL ME THAT HE, LIKE BIOTRON, IS... DEAD!

WE DON'T KNOW, MICROTRON. HE WAS CARRIED OFF BY A CAVE-BAT. WE PLAN TO SEARCH THESE MOUNTAINS UNTIL...



JUST SKIN THAT CAVE-BAT AN' ðTIK ð MAKE ME A COAT!



I SAID I'D NEVER ðTIK ð WEAR A DEAD ANIMAL SKIN, BUT BELIEVE ME, AFTER WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH-- THERE ARE ðTIK ð EXCEPTIONS!

ALL, AT LAST, IS WELL.



AT THAT MOMENT, AT A POINT IN THE MICRO-VERSE BETWEEN THE PLANETS OF SPARTAK AND HOME-WORLD...

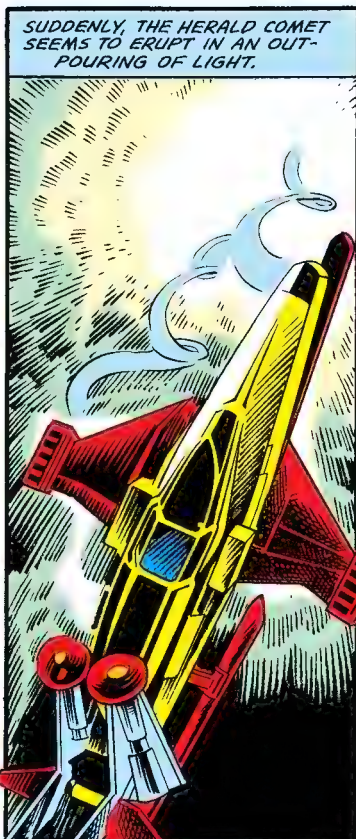
THE HERALD COMET LURES ME ON!



COMET, MY PATH WAS CHOSEN FOR ME THE DAY YOU SHONE IN THE HEAVENS!

I WILL DISCOVER WHY, EVEN IF YOU LEAD TO MY DEATH!

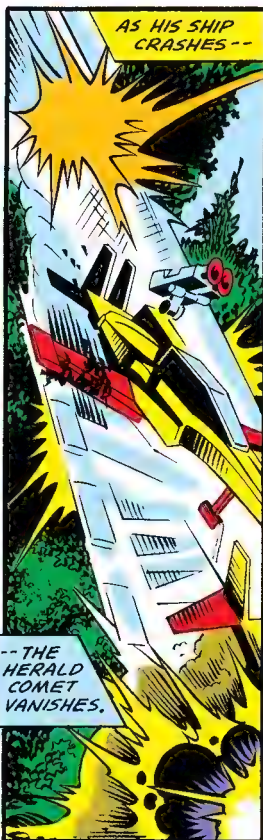
*SEE MICRONAUTS #28.--TOM.



SUDDENLY, THE HERALD COMET SEEMS TO ERUPT IN AN OUT-POURING OF LIGHT.

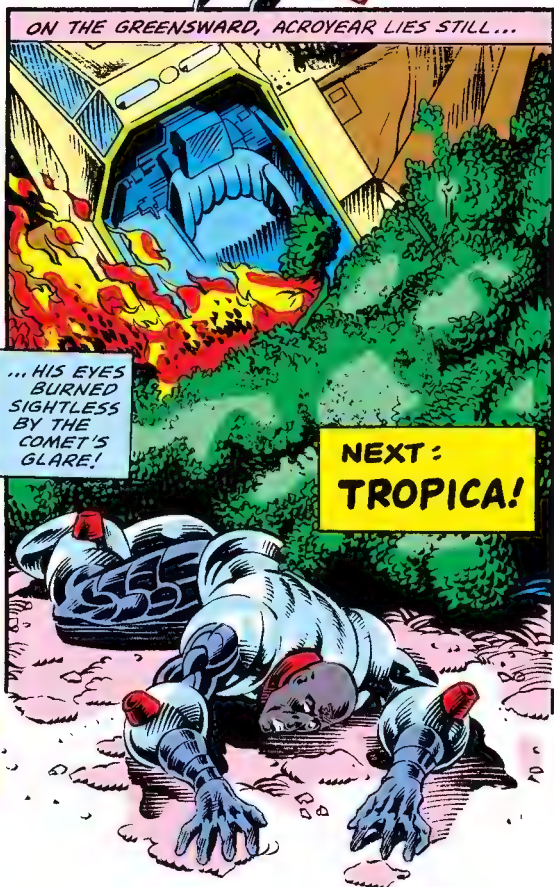


...BUT HIS BATTLE CRUISER GOES INTO A SCREAMING DIVE TOWARDS THE MOLECULAR PLANET--HOMEWORLD!



AS HIS SHIP CRASHES--

--THE HERALD COMET VANISHES.



ON THE GREENSWARD, ACROYEAR LIES STILL...

...HIS EYES BURNED SIGHTLESS BY THE COMET'S GLARE!

NEXT:
TROPICA!

50c

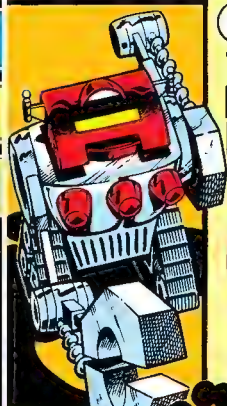
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MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS



STRANDED IN AN UNCHARTED JUNGLE, HIS EYES SEARED SIGHTLESS IN AN ACCIDENT, ARCOYEAR BATTLES THE DEADLIEST THREAT OF ALL --

BOB LAYTON

...DEVIL OF TROPICA!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

TROPICA!

BLINDED BY AN EXPLODING COMET, ACROYEAR HAS CRASH-LANDED ON TROPICA, ONE OF THE MANY MOLECULAR ZONES OF HOMEWORLD...

DRAWING HIMSELF FROM HIS RUINED SPACECRAFT THE FORMER LORD OF SPARTAK REALIZES THAT HIS CHANCES OF SURVIVAL ARE SLIM...

SPACE
GLIDER

MARIONETTE

BUG

MICROTRON

PHAROID

THOUGH HIS EYES ARE SIGHTLESS HE HEARS HARSH, LABORED BREATHING FROM THE UNDERBRUSH...

...AND KNOWS THAT HE IS NOT ALONE!

GUEST-STARRING:
DR. STRANGE, MASTER
OF THE MYSTIC ARTS

BILL MANTLO
WRITER

PAT BRODERICK
PENCILS

DANNY BULANADI
INKS

SIMEK
LETTERS

SHAREN
COLORS

DEFALCO
EDITOR

SHOOTER
ED.-IN-CHIEF

SLOWLY, ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY, ACROYEAR SHIFTS HIS POSITION ON THE GREENSWARD UNTIL HIS ENERGY SWORD FACES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BREATHING.

IF IT IS SOME ANIMAL THAT STALKS HIM, HE WILL NOT DIE EASY.

BUT HOW CAME HE HERE?

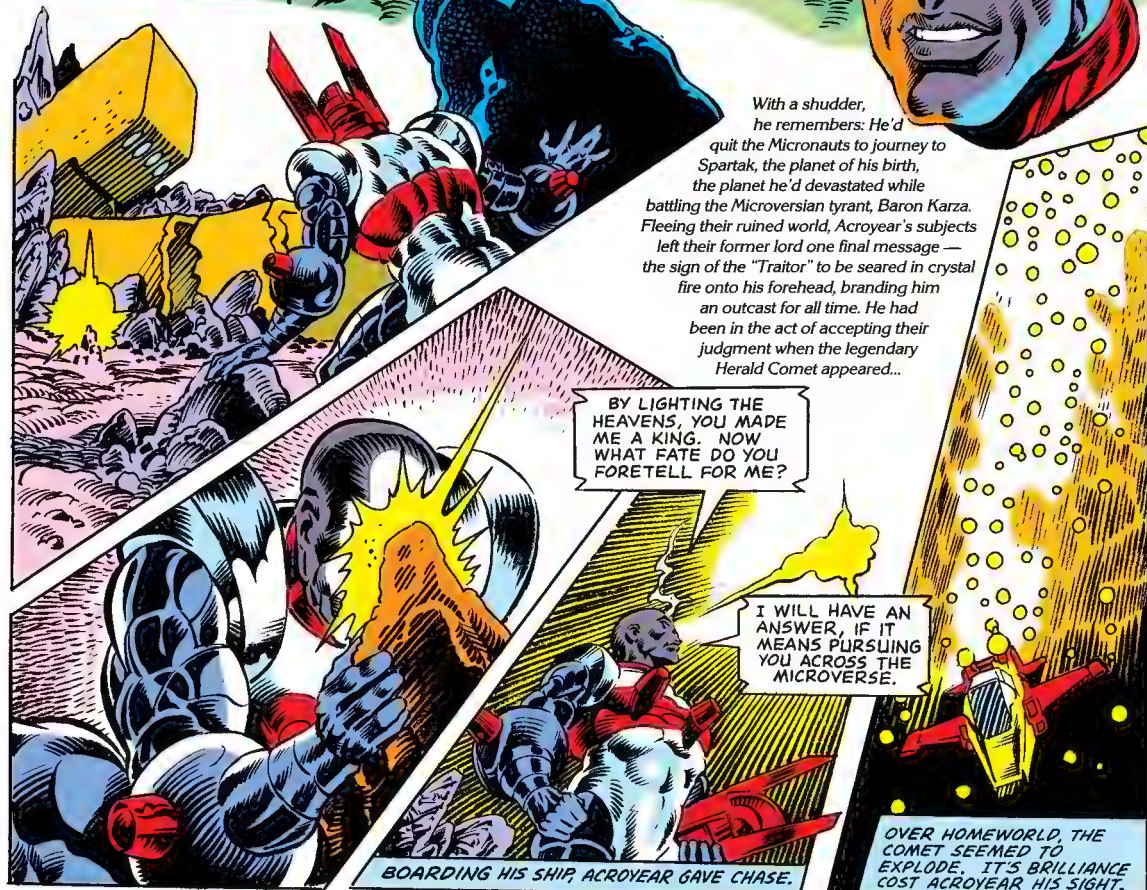
With a shudder, he remembers: He'd quit the Micronauts to journey to Spartak, the planet of his birth, the planet he'd devastated while battling the Microversian tyrant, Baron Karza. Fleeing their ruined world, Acroyear's subjects left their former lord one final message — the sign of the "Traitor" to be seared in crystal fire onto his forehead, branding him an outcast for all time. He had been in the act of accepting their judgment when the legendary Herald Comet appeared...

BY LIGHTING THE HEAVENS, YOU MADE ME A KING. NOW WHAT FATE DO YOU FORETELL FOR ME?

I WILL HAVE AN ANSWER, IF IT MEANS PURSUING YOU ACROSS THE MICROVERSE.

BOARDING HIS SHIP, ACROYEAR GAVE CHASE.

OVER HOMEWORLD, THE COMET SEEMED TO EXPLODE. IT'S BRILLIANCE COST ACROYEAR HIS SIGHT.





--AND
CONTROL OF
HIS CRAFT!



I HAVE CRASHED ON
HOMEWORLD, WHERE MY
FELLOW MICRONAUTS
PURSUE THEIR QUEST FOR
THE THREE KEYS TO THE
ENIGMA FORCE, WHICH
MUST BE FOUND ERE
GREAT DISASTERS O'ER-
TAKE THE MICROVERSE.



IS THIS, THEN, MY
DESTINY, TO
ABANDON MY SEARCH
FOR MY WANDERING
PEOPLE--

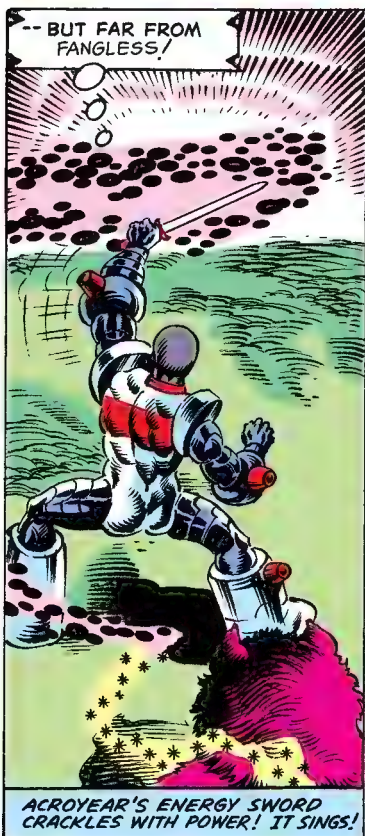
--AND TO SWEAR MY
ALLEGIANCE
TO A
GREATER
GOAL?

OR HAS THE
HERALD COMET
BROUGHT ME HERE
TO DIE AT THE
FANGS OF SOME
UNSEEN BEAST?



I HEAR A
HEAVY
TREAD. MY
HUNTER
DRAWS
NIGH.

HE WILL
FIND ME
BLIND--



-- BUT FAR FROM
FANGLESS!

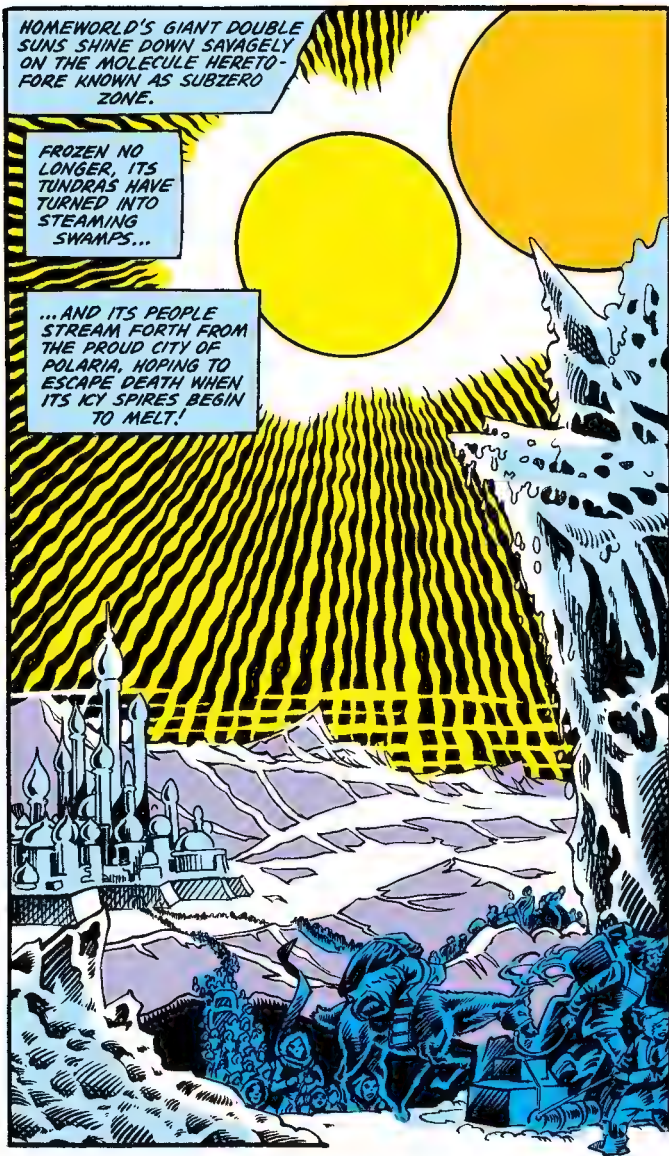
ACROYEAR'S ENERGY SWORD
CRACKLES WITH POWER! IT SINGS!



UNFORTUNATELY, IT ALSO DROWNS OUT THE SOFT FOOTPAD OF THE
SAVAGE CREATURE WHICH NOW LEAVES THE JUNGLE'S COVER...

NOW ACROYEAR
CAN NEITHER
HEAR NOR SEE
THE BEAST!

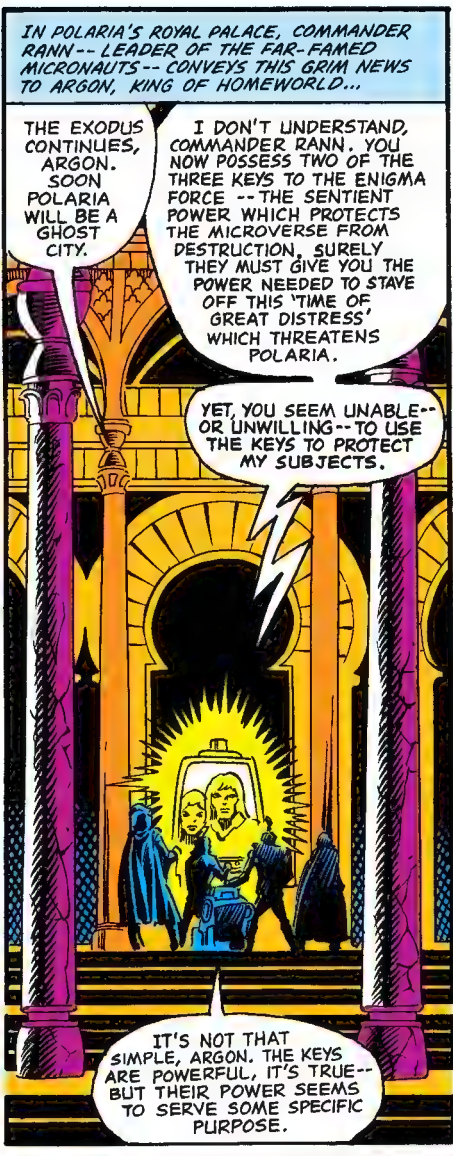
THE MIGHTY
MICRONAUT
MAY WELL
GO BLINDLY
TO HIS
DEATH!



HOMEWORLD'S GIANT DOUBLE SUNS SHINE DOWN SAVAGELY ON THE MOLECULE HERETOFORE KNOWN AS SUBZERO ZONE.

FROZEN NO LONGER, ITS TUNDRAS HAVE TURNED INTO STEAMING SWAMPS...

...AND ITS PEOPLE STREAM FORTH FROM THE PROUD CITY OF POLARIA, HOPING TO ESCAPE DEATH WHEN ITS ICY SPIRES BEGIN TO MELT!



IN POLARIA'S ROYAL PALACE, COMMANDER RANN-- LEADER OF THE FAR-FAMED MICRONAUTS-- CONVEYS THIS GRIM NEWS TO ARGON, KING OF HOMEWORLD...

THE EXODUS CONTINUES, ARGON. SOON POLARIA WILL BE A GHOST CITY.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, COMMANDER RANN. YOU NOW POSSESS TWO OF THE THREE KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE --THE SENTIENT POWER WHICH PROTECTS THE MICROVERSE FROM DESTRUCTION, SURELY THEY MUST GIVE YOU THE POWER NEEDED TO STAVE OFF THIS 'TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS' WHICH THREATENS POLARIA.

YET, YOU SEEM UNABLE--OR UNWILLING--TO USE THE KEYS TO PROTECT MY SUBJECTS.

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE, ARGON. THE KEYS ARE POWERFUL, IT'S TRUE-- BUT THEIR POWER SEEMS TO SERVE SOME SPECIFIC PURPOSE.



ON OCEANIA, THE FIRST KEY TURNED THE INHABITANTS OF SEAZONE INTO MEN-FISH SO THAT THEY MIGHT SURVIVE IN THE SEA ONCE THEIR CITY FELL.

A CITY DESTROYED-- WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED-- IS NOT A DISASTER?

IT'S PEOPLE LIVE, AND THE FORM OF THEIR SALVATION WAS CHOSEN BY ONE OF THEIR OWN.



HERE, PRINCE PEACOCK-- APPARENTLY THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF WIELDING THE KEY TO SAVE POLARIA-- REFUSES TO DO SO... BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THAT HIS PEOPLE HAVE BECOME AS COLD, AS HEARTLESS, AS THEIR CLIMATE!

INDEED, ACQUIRING THE KEY COST PEACOCK THE WOMAN HE LOVED--AND POLARIA A QUEEN.

ARGON, WHAT IF THE PURPOSE OF THE ENIGMA FORCE'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE AFFAIRS OF MEN IS TO FORCE THOSE STALE AND STAGNANT CULTURES BACK ONTO THE ROAD OF PROGRESS?

AFTER ALL, THOUGH SEAZONE AND POLARIA ARE DYING, THEIR PEOPLE LIVE BY ADAPTING TO CHANGE.

IN ANY EVENT, KING ARGON, COMMANDER RANN HAS TRIED TO EMPLOY THE POWER OF THE KEYS TO STAVE OFF POLARIA'S IMMINENT DESTRUCTION WITHOUT SUCCESS.

ARE YOU ASKING ME TO ACCEPT THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE CULTURES, WHICH HAVE DEVELOPED ON HOMEWORLD OVER THE CENTURIES, ON THE BASIS OF SOME UNFOUNDED THEORY?

NO, COMMANDER! THE PROPHECY FOR LOCATING THE ENIGMA FORCE WAS CLEAR IN ITS MESSAGE!

"A time of darkness there will be;
Of great distress on land and sea!
Find thyself and thou wilt find me--
the secret lies in these
Keys three!"

I WANT YOU AND YOUR MICRONAUTS TO FIND ALL THREE KEYS, COMMANDER RANN-- SO THAT THEY CAN BE USED TO REVIVE OUR LINK WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE BEFORE ANY MORE OF MY REALM SUFFERS DISASTER!

HIS REALM? HE ACTS AS IF HE CARES MORE ABOUT THE MICROVERSE THAN WE DO!

MICROTRON, HAVE YOU SEEN ARGON'S SISTER, THE PRINCESS MARI?

SHE IS OUT ON THE TERRACE WITH PRINCE PEACOCK, COMMANDER, TRYING TO GET HIM TO LEAVE POLARIA WITH US!

BUT YOU MUST COME, PRINCE PEACOCK! IF THE SUN GROWS ANY HOTTER, POLARIA WILL MELT AROUND YOU!

LET THE SUNS BLAZE DOWN, FAIR MAID! LET MELT THE ICE AND SNOWS!

THIS ACCURSED KINGDOM HAS MADE ALL POLARIANS AS COLD AS ICE, AS DISTANT FROM EACH OTHER AS THE TWIN SUNS OF HOMEWORLD ONCE WERE FROM SUBZERO ZONE.

MY PEOPLE NEED WARMING, MILADY-- 'TILL MAKE THEM HUMAN AGAIN.

BUT NOT I! THE COLDNESS OF MY HEART COST ME THE WOMAN I LOVED! I'LL NOT OUTLIVE HER!

UNABLE TO SWAY PEACOCK OR TO FORESTALL POLARIA'S DESTRUCTION, THE MOROSE MICRONAUTS BOARD THEIR ASTROSTATION AND TAKE THEIR LEAVE...

THE ICE MELTING OFF OF SUBZERO ZONE'S MOUNTAINS WOULD WATER MY NATIVE SANDZONE FOR MILLENNIA!

WATER! BLEECH! LET'S BEAT IT 'TIK< 'NAUTS, BEFORE SUB-ZERO ZONE TURNS AS 'TIK< WET AS OCEANIA!

WE'RE ON OUR WAY, BUG! OUR NEXT STOP IS PHAROID'S KINGDOM-- AEGYPTA!

AEGYPTA, WHERE I MUST DO MY DUTY TO HE WHOM I AM BOUND TO SERVE--AND BETRAY THE MICRONAUTS, PERHAPS UNTO DEATH!

I WISH THERE WERE SOME OTHER WAY!

HEY, 'NAUTS! YA 'TIK< HERE THAT SOUND-- LIKE A GIANT 'TIK< CRACKIN' HIS KNUCKLES?

IT'S POLARIA! THE SUN'S 'TIK< BREAKIN' IT UP!

INDEED, WHERE ONLY A SHORT TIME BEFORE MAPS HAD SHOWN A SHINING CITY--

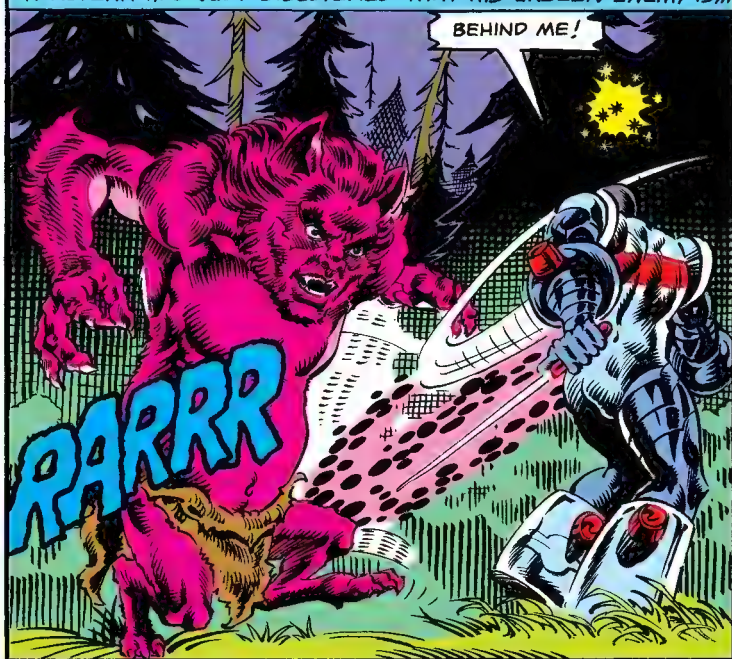
--THEY WILL, IN THE FUTURE, DEPICT ONLY A SHIMMERING LAKE.

IT WAS SO USELESS, ARCTURUS! IF ONLY PEACOCK COULD HAVE SHOWN QUEEN FRIA THAT HE LOVED HER, TOGETHER THEY MIGHT HAVE USED THE KEY TO SAVE THEIR CITY!

INSTEAD, THEY DIED-- AND THEIR CITY DIED WITH THEM!

THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO, MARI! NOTHING!

MEANWHILE, BACK ON TROPICA, THE MIGHTY-- BUT BLIND-- KING ACROYEAR HAS JUST DISCOVERED THAT HIS UNSEEN ENEMY IS...



BEHIND ME!

RARRR

BY THE WORLDMIND! WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE DO I FACE? HIS GROWL REVERBERATES LIKE THUNDER... YET, HE MOVES AS SILENTLY AND STEALTHILY AS A TARN...

EH? WHAT NEW SOUND...? MUSIC?



FOR A MOMENT, THE DULCET TONES RING LOUD IN ACROYEAR'S EARS. THEN THEY PASS, LEAVING HIM CONFUSED-- AND ANGERED!

'TIS SOME TRICK-- MEANT TO UNBALANCE ME! PERHAPS THE CREATURE'S NATURE IS TO CHARM ME WITH SONG WHILST HIS FANGS SEEK OUT MY THROAT! BUT I'LL NOT SUCCEMB!



GRRRR

EYES BLAZING, THE PREDATOR BACKS AWAY... BUT ONLY FAR ENOUGH TO SECURE A WEAPON WITH WHICH TO COUNTER ACROYEAR'S ENERGY SWORD!

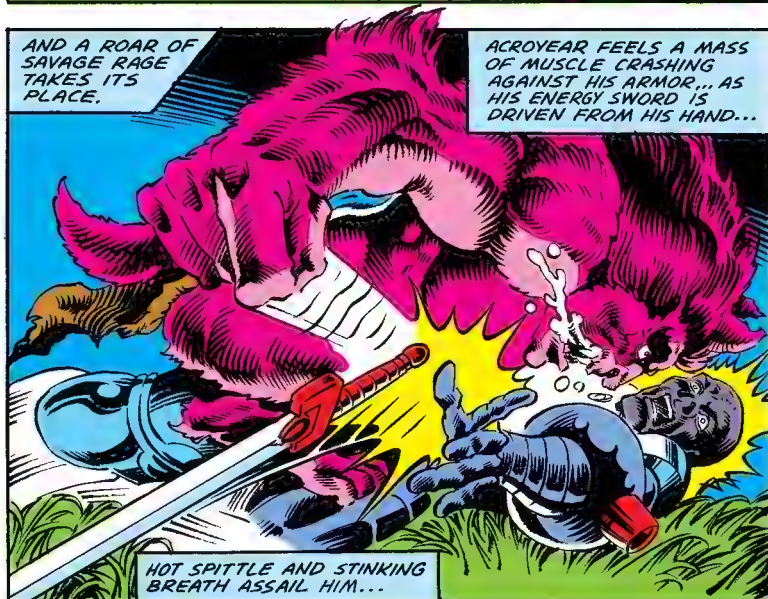
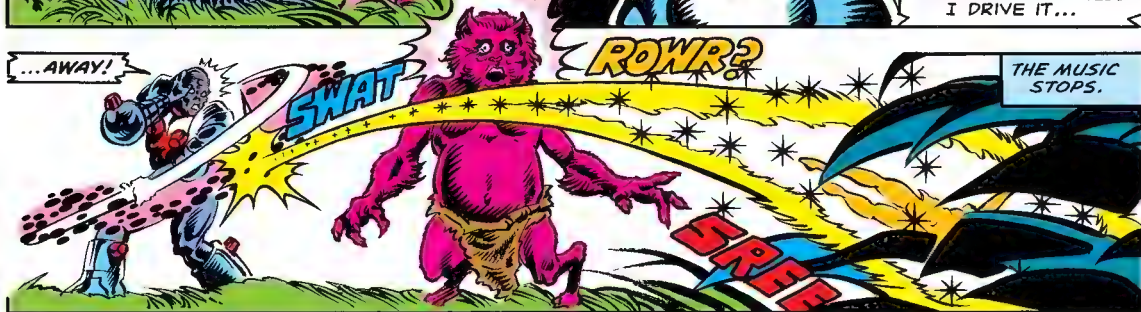
THUS ARMED, THIS SLAVERING JUNGLE-BEAST ADVANCES ON THE SIGHTLESS SPARTAKIAN...

RARRGH

COME, CREATURE! MY ENERGY SWORD AWAITS! YOU'LL PAY DEARLY FOR YOUR DINNER!



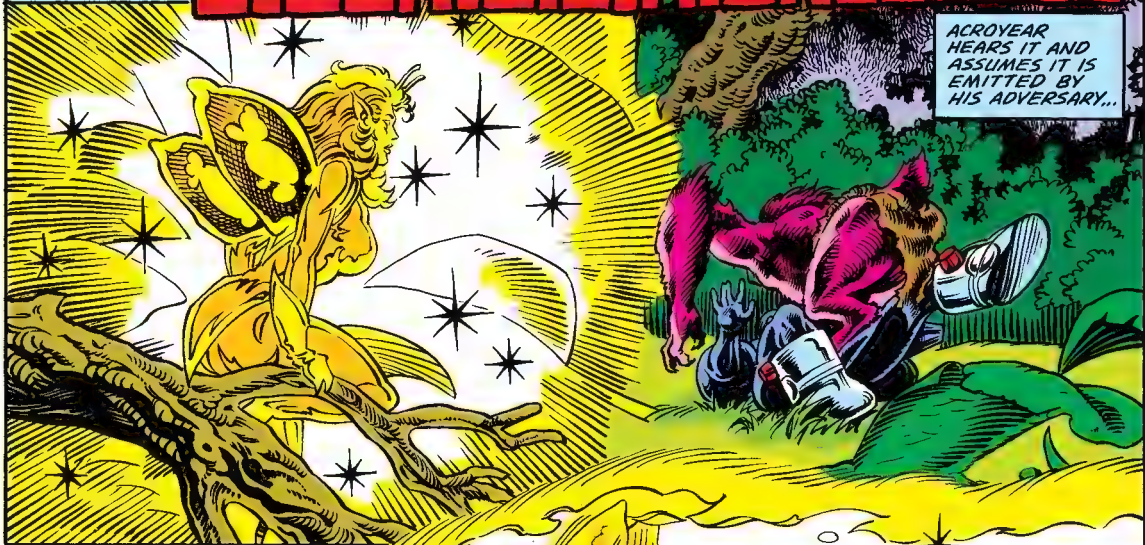
THERE IS A HIGH, MELLIFLOUS TRILL OF PROTEST...



THEN--AGAIN--
COMES THE
MUSIC!

SILLAILILIAISREEEEEE

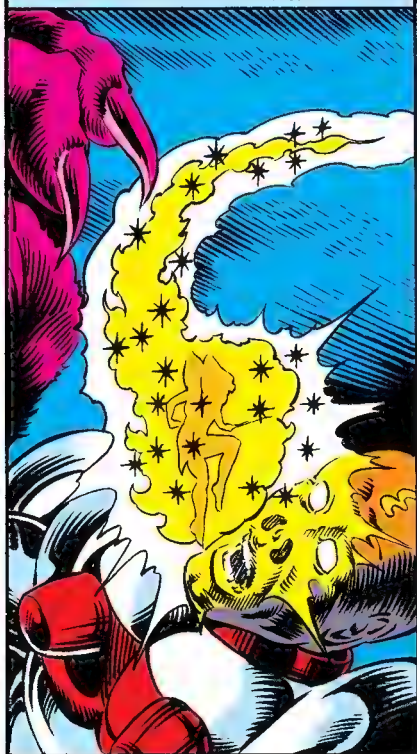
ACROYEAR
HEARS IT AND
ASSUMES IT IS
EMITTED BY
HIS ADVERSARY...



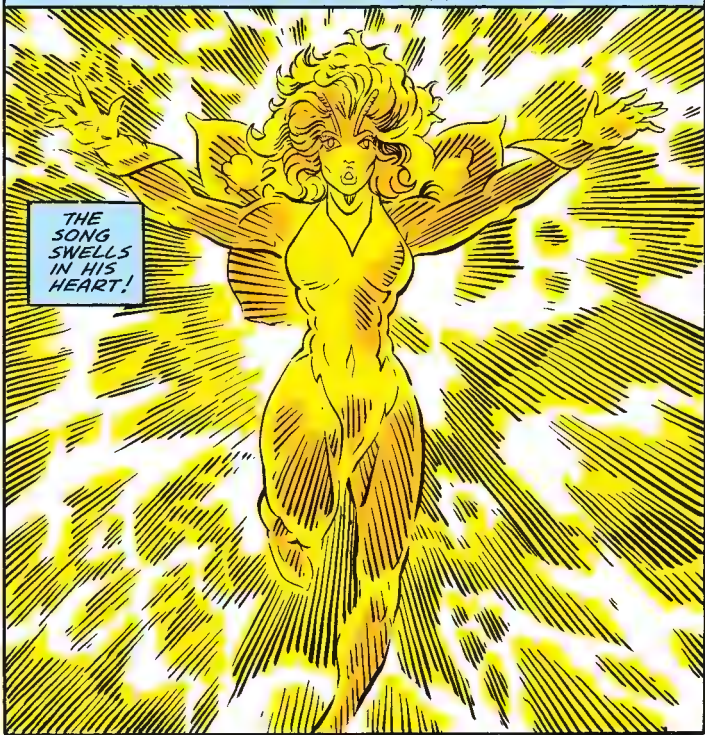
HE IS WRONG.
THE SOUND
STEMS FROM
A WINGED
MAID NO
BIGGER
THAN
ACROYEAR'S
HAND. SHE
RISES...



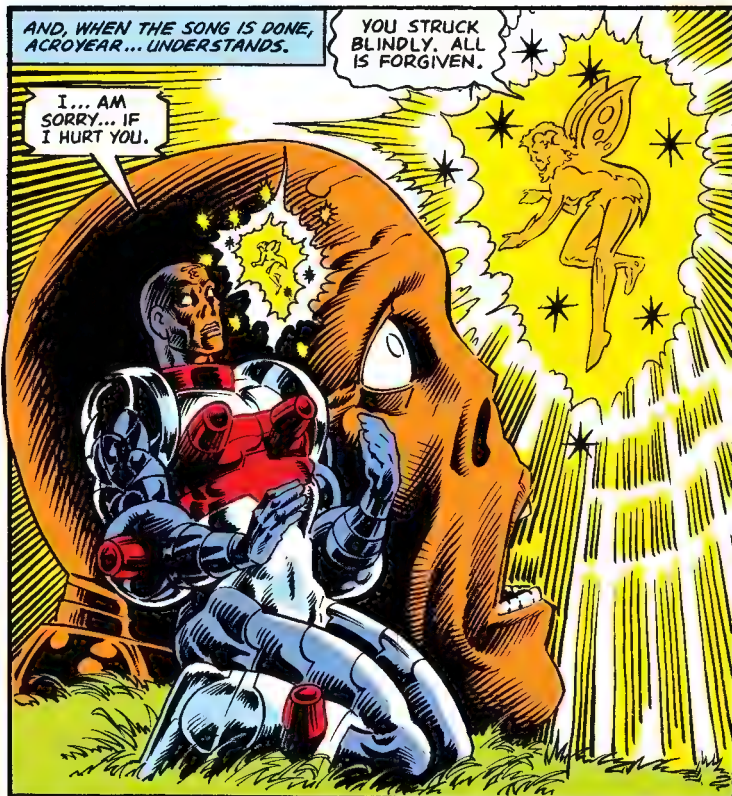
...AND DARTS BETWEEN ACROYEAR'S
SIGHTLESS EYES AND THE CLAWS
POISED TO RAKE THEM OUT.



IT IS THEN, TO ACROYEAR'S AMAZEMENT, THAT HE ENCOUNTERS
NOT THE ULTIMATE DARKNESS OF A SWIFT AND SAVAGE
DEATH... BUT AN INCREDIBLY INTENSE LIGHT THAT SEEMS
TO SING OF LIFE ETERNAL!



THE
SONG
SWELLS
IN HIS
HEART!



AND, WHEN THE SONG IS DONE, ACROYEAR... UNDERSTANDS.

YOU STRUCK BLINDLY. ALL IS FORGIVEN.

I... AM SORRY... IF I HURT YOU.



SIGHTLESS ONE! I TOO, AM SORRY! UNTIL FIREFLYTE OPENED UP A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN US--

--I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT YOU WOULD MISTAKE MY GUTTURAL SPEECH FOR THE GROWLINGS OF SOME WILD BEAST.

AS LONG AS FIREFLYTE DANCES BEFORE HIS SIGHTLESS EYES, ACROYEAR "SEES"...



YOU SPEAK! YOU REASON! AND YET YOU SOUGHT TO BURY YOUR FANGS IN MY THROAT!

PLEASE, YOUR SPEECH SOUNDED AS WILD TO ME AS MINE DID TO YOU-- AND YOUR SWORD NEARLY CUT ME IN TWAIN!



THEN, WHEN YOU STRUCK MY FRIEND, FIREFLYTE, I BECAME AS A WILD THING AND GAVE WAY TO RAGE!

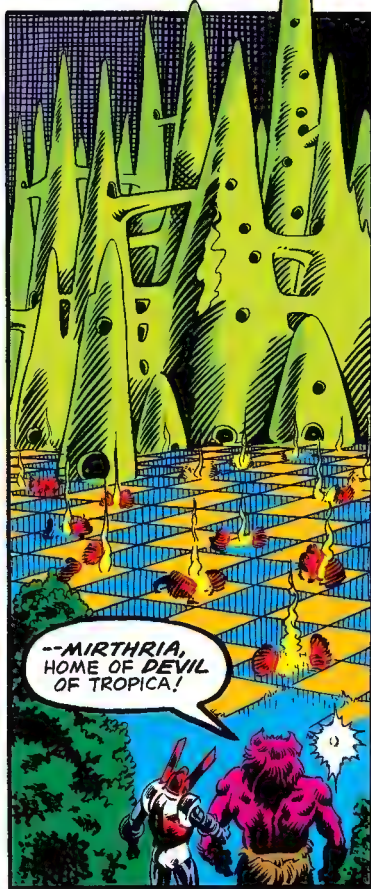
BUT NOW WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. HERE, LET ME RETRIEVE YOUR HELMET--



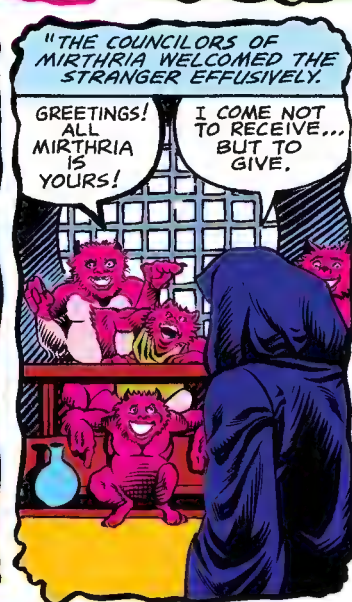
--AND TAKE YOU TO A PLACE WHERE YOU WILL FIND FOOD AND SHELTER.

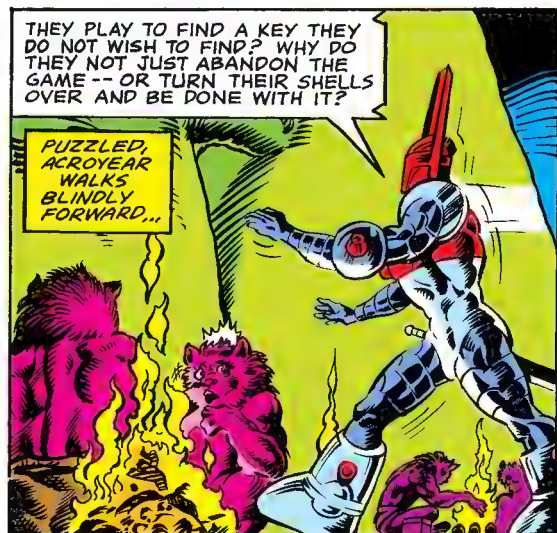
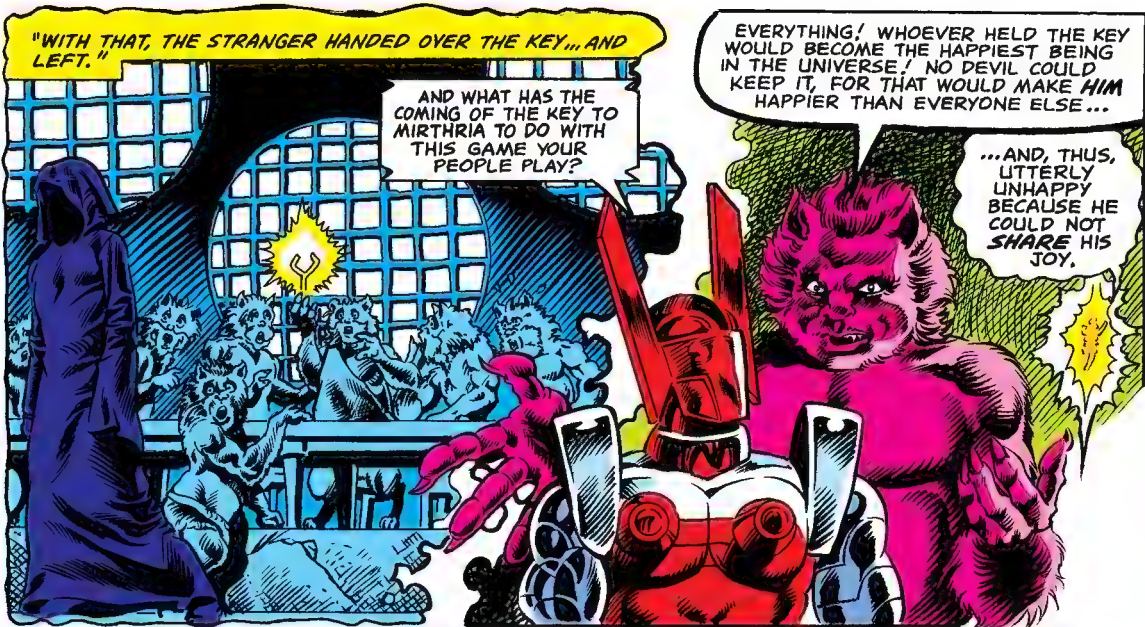
A CITY?

A BEAUTIFUL CITY! MY CITY! FIREFLYTE WILL LEAD THE WAY SO THAT YOUR EYES MAY SEE THROUGH HERS--



--MIRTHRIA, HOME OF DEVIL OF TROPICA!





THAT NIGHT, WHILE
DEVIL SLEEPS,
ACROYEAR QUERIES
FIREFLYTE...

THE KEY BROUGHT TO MIRTHRIA MUST BE ONE OF
THE THREE KEYS OF THE ENIGMA FORCE! IT CAN
AVERT GREAT DISASTERS TO HOMEWORLD AND THE
MICROVERSE.

SUCH A DISASTER HAS
ALREADY OVERTAKEN POOR
MIRTHRIA, I FEAR.

WHAT DO
YOU
MEAN?

LET ME GIVE YOU SIGHT,
LORD ACROYEAR--

--THAT YOU MIGHT
VENTURE FORTH
FROM THIS PLAYER'S
PLAIN --

--AND "SEE," FAIR MIRTHRIA AS ONCE IT
WAS -- BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE
GAME.

AGAIN FIREFLYTE'S
SONG GIVES ACROYEAR
THE GIFT OF SIGHT...

...AND HE
FOLLOWS HER
FLOATING FORM
TOWARDS A CITY
LIVING SOME TIME
IN THE PAST.

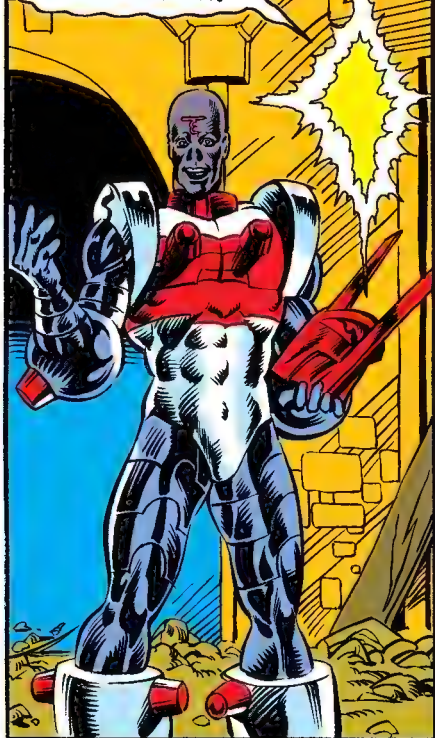
THE CLANK OF HIS ARMOR
WAKES THE SLEEPING
DEVIL...

...WHO WONDERS WHY HIS FIREFLYTE
HAS ABANDONED HIM TO LEAD THE
SIGHTLESS STRANGER INTO HIS
UNINHABITED CITY.

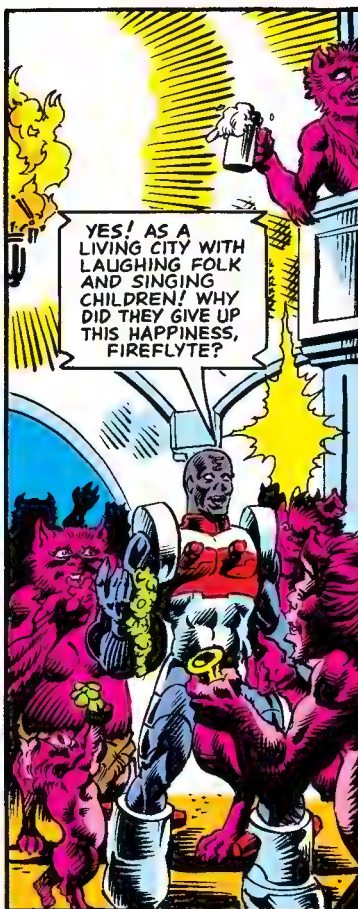
AYE, DEVIL
WONDERS--
AND FOLLOWS!

THE CITY STREETS OF MIRTHRIA HAVE FALLEN INTO DISREPAIR SINCE THE DEVILS WHO LIVED HERE HAVE DEPARTED TO DEVOTE ALL THEIR TIME TO THE GAME...

BUT YOU SEE MIRTHRIA AS IT WAS... DON'T YOU, LORD ACROYEAR?



YES! AS A LIVING CITY WITH LAUGHING FOLK AND SINGING CHILDREN! WHY DID THEY GIVE UP THIS HAPPINESS, FIREFLYTE?



DEVIL TOLD YOU, A STRANGER CAME WITH A KEY WHICH PROMISED **GREATER** HAPPINESS STILL-- AND ALL THE DEVILS BECAME OBSESSED WITH **NOT** FINDING IT LEST THEY BECOME HAPPIER THAN THEIR NEIGHBORS.

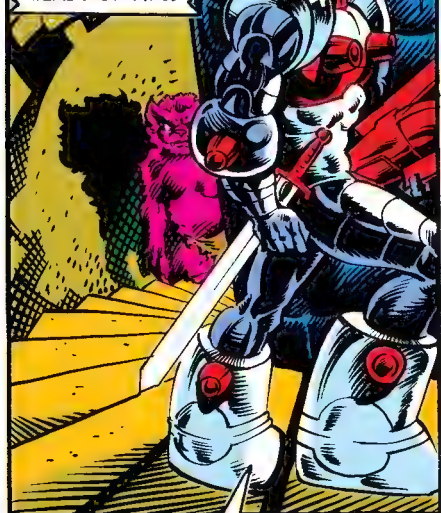
SUCH WAS NOT THE RESULT WHICH THE STRANGER HAD INTENDED-- BUT 'T WAS THE RESULT NONETHELESS.



MY FIREFLYTE SPEAKS TO ACROYEAR, REVEALING THINGS TO HIM WHICH SHE NEVER SHARED WITH ME!

WHAT OF YOU, LORD ACROYEAR? DO YOU CRAVE HAPPINESS?

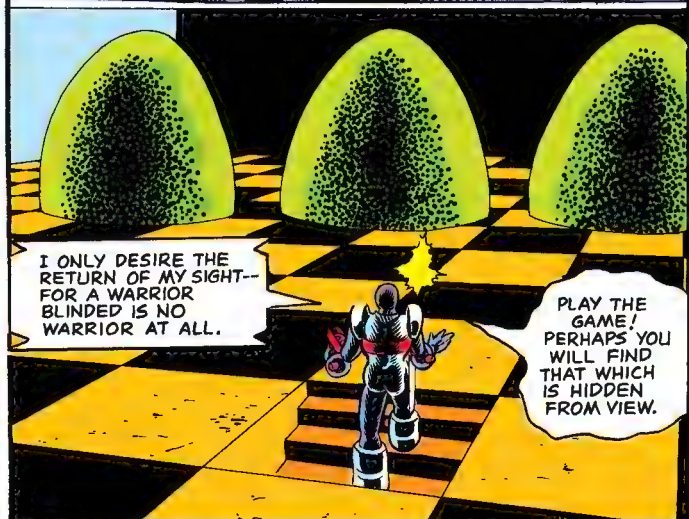
OF ALL I KNOW, I KNOW MYSELF LEAST OF ALL.



NO, I DO NOT CRAVE HAPPINESS AS SUCH, NOR COULD I ENJOY IT WHILE MY PEOPLE WANDER THE STARS AND THE MICROVERSE REMAINS ENDANGERED.



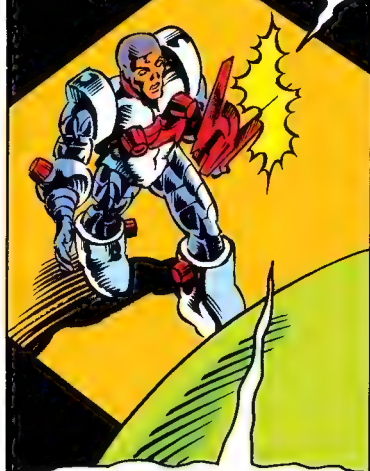
I ONLY DESIRE THE RETURN OF MY SIGHT-- FOR A WARRIOR BLINDED IS NO WARRIOR AT ALL.



PLAY THE GAME! PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND THAT WHICH IS HIDDEN FROM VIEW.

ALL IS HIDDEN FROM MY VIEW, FIREFLYTE, SAVE THAT WHICH I "SEE" WITH THE VISION YOU HAVE LENT ME.

TRUE.



WOULD YOU PLAY THE GAME IF --BY HELPING YOURSELF-- YOU COULD BENEFIT THE ENTIRE MICROVERSE?

NO! I HAVE FOLLOWED! I HAVE HEARD! I HAVE SEEN! I BROUGHT YOU HERE OUT OF KINDNESS-- AND YOU WOULD BETRAY ME BY TRYING TO TAKE ALL HAPPINESS FOR YOURSELF!

I WOULD BE A FOOL NOT TO.



THAT IS WHERE YOU DIFFER FROM THE DEVILS WHO, HAVING EYES, ARE TOO BLIND TO SEE BEYOND THEMSELVES.

YOU MOVE MY HAND TO A SMOOTH-SURFACED OBJECT.

OF COURSE, IT IS A SHELL -- SIMILAR-- BUT LARGER-- TO THOSE USED BY THE DEVILS IN PLAYING THEIR GAME.



THERE MUST BE THREE OF THEM!

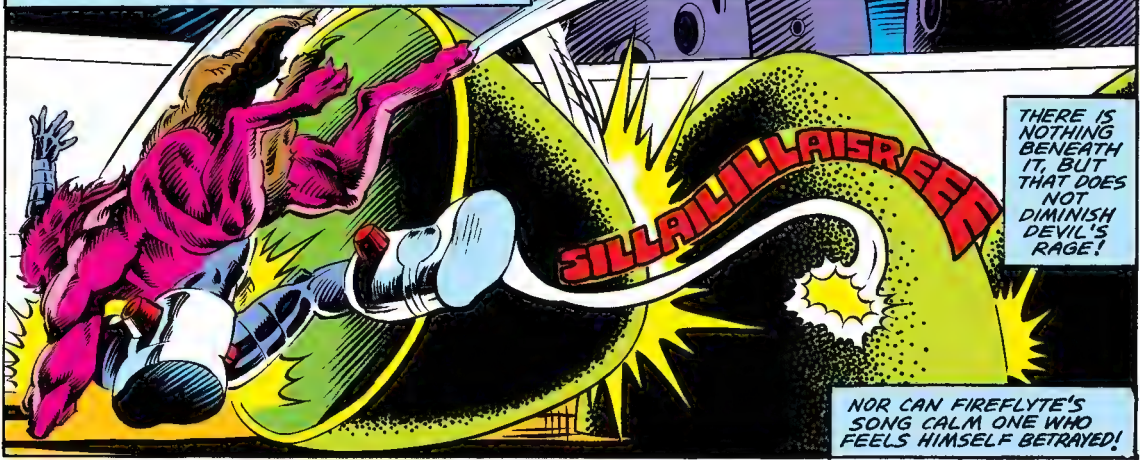
TO FIND THAT WHICH IS HIDDEN, I WILL O'ERTURN THEM ALL.



IT IS SACRILEGE! IT IS BLASPHEMY!

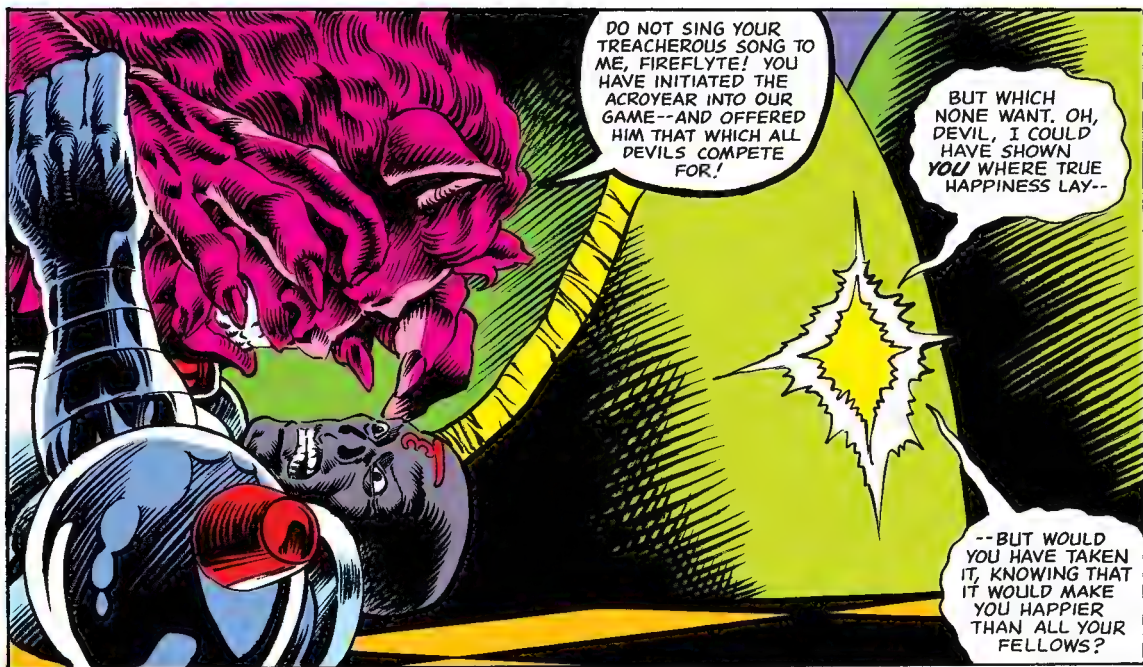
IT IS AGAINST THE RULES!

ACROYEAR HEARS DEVIL'S RUSH BUT, BEING BLIND, CAN DO NOTHING TO AVOID IT! TOGETHER THEY HIT THE FIRST SHELL-- AND OVERTURN IT!



THERE IS NOTHING BENEATH IT, BUT THAT DOES NOT DIMINISH DEVIL'S RAGE!

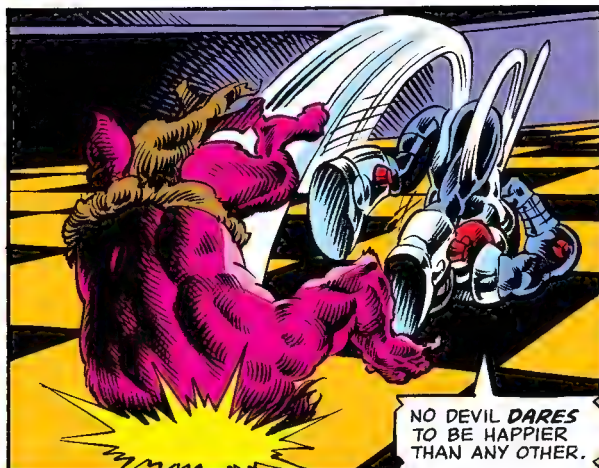
NOR CAN FIREFLYTE'S SONG CALM ONE WHO FEELS HIMSELF BETRAYED!



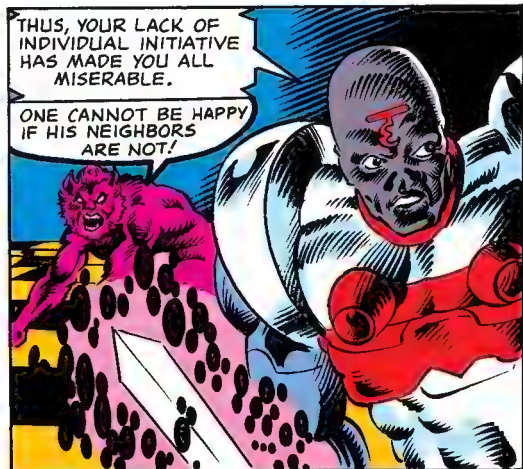
DO NOT SING YOUR TREACHEROUS SONG TO ME, FIREFLYTE! YOU HAVE INITIATED THE ACROYEAR INTO OUR GAME--AND OFFERED HIM THAT WHICH ALL DEVILS COMPETE FOR!

BUT WHICH NONE WANT. OH, DEVIL, I COULD HAVE SHOWN **YOU** WHERE TRUE HAPPINESS LAY--

--BUT WOULD YOU HAVE TAKEN IT, KNOWING THAT IT WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPIER THAN ALL YOUR FELLOWS?



NO DEVIL **DARES** TO BE HAPPIER THAN ANY OTHER.



THUS, YOUR LACK OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE HAS MADE YOU ALL MISERABLE.

ONE CANNOT BE HAPPY IF HIS NEIGHBORS ARE NOT!



NO-- BUT PERHAPS YOU MISINTERPRETED THE MEANING OF THE GAME.

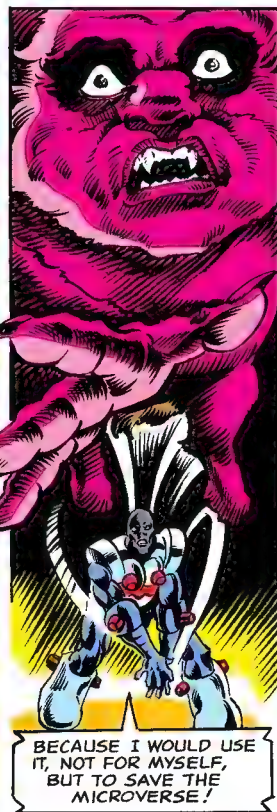
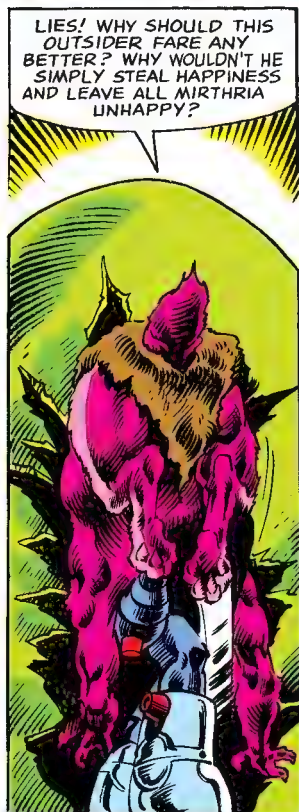
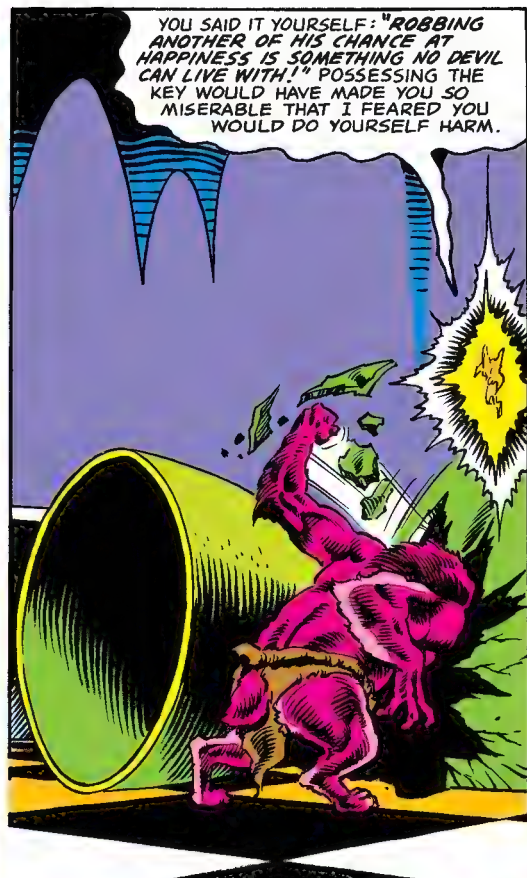
WHAT IF, BY ATTAINING TRUE HAPPINESS, ONE GAINS THE ABILITY TO MAKE **ALL** AS HAPPY AS HIMSELF?



I AM BEGINNING TO GUESS WHO THE STRANGER WAS WHO BROUGHT THE KEY TO MIRTHRIA. HAPPINESS FOR ALL IS THE SORT OF GIFT A **TIME TRAVELER**--THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF THE ENIGMA FORCE-- WOULD BESTOW.

ACROYEAR'S ENERGY SWORD SLICES THROUGH THE SECOND GIANT SHELL!

IT, TOO, IS EMPTY!



NOT WISHING TO HURT DEVIL, YET NOT WISHING TO BE HURT HIMSELF, ACROYEAR BLINDLY HURLS THE ENRAGED MIRTHRIAN FROM HIM! DEVIL STRIKES THE THIRD AND FINAL SHELL ATOP THE TOWER TERRACE, SHATTERING IT...

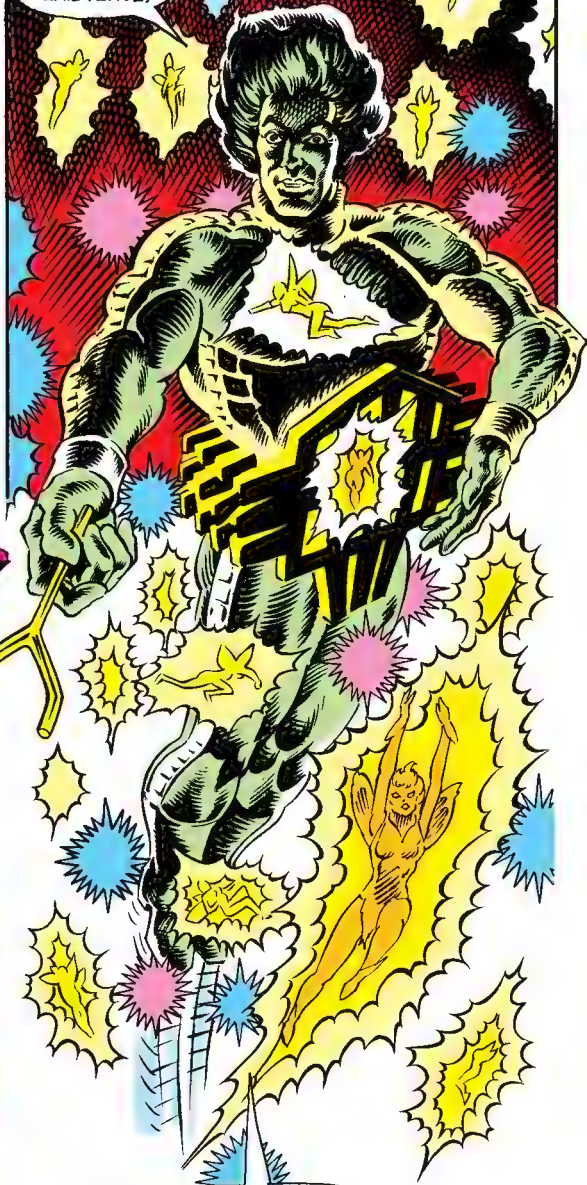


IMMEDIATELY, THE NIGHT IS FILLED WITH A GENTLE GREEN GLOW, AND A SONG--AS SWEET AND AS MYSTERIOUS AS THE MUSIC OF THE FIREFLYTES--PERVADES THE ATMOSPHERE!

IN THE CENTER OF THE GLOW, SURROUNDED BY SINGING FIREFLYTES, IS A VISION ACROYEAR KNOWS WELL-- FOR IT IS ONE OF THE EMERALD EMISSARIES OF THE AWESOME **ENIGMA FORCE!**

GREETINGS. I AM THE **TIME TRAVELER**-- OR, RATHER, I WAS. YOU, WHO HEAR MY WORDS, KNOW THAT I AM NOTHING BUT A MEMORY NOW.

THE FACT THAT YOU HEAR AND SEE MY **IMAGE** MEANS THAT I HAVE PASSED BEYOND THE PALE OF EXISTENCE.



BUT TAKE THIS KEY--USE IT WELL--FOR HAVING FOUND IT, YOU POSSESS THE STRENGTH REQUIRED TO WIELD IT.

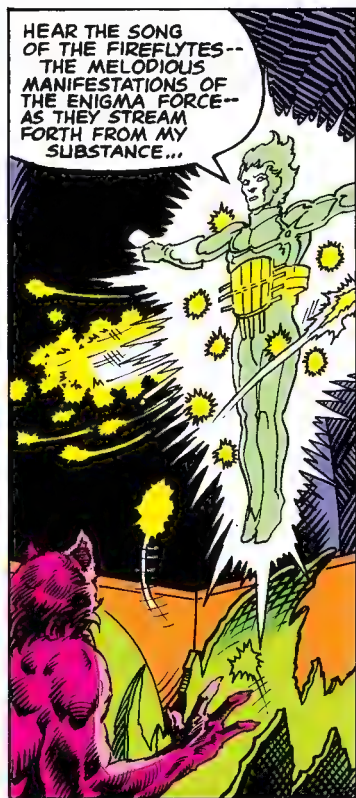
BATHED IN THE GLOW
EMANATING FROM THE IMAGE,
ACROYEAR SHIELDS HIS EYES
AND REALIZES...

I... CAN
SEE!

LONGING TO ACCEPT THE
HAPPINESS IT OFFERS, DEVIL
STARES INTO THE BRILLIANCE--

HOW? HOW CAN I
ACCEPT THAT WHICH
WILL BE DENIED TO
OTHERS?

HEAR THE SONG
OF THE FIREFLYTES--
THE MELODIOUS
MANIFESTATIONS OF
THE ENIGMA FORCE--
AS THEY STREAM
FORTH FROM MY
SUBSTANCE...



"...BRINGING
HAPPINESS
TO ALL!"



AT ONCE,
KNOWING
AGAIN THE
VERY HAPPINESS
WHICH THEY
ABANDONED
TO ENGAGE IN
THE GAME, THE
DEVILS OF
MIRTHRIA GIVE
UP THEIR
SOMBER PLAY...
AND BEGIN
TO LAUGH
ANEW!

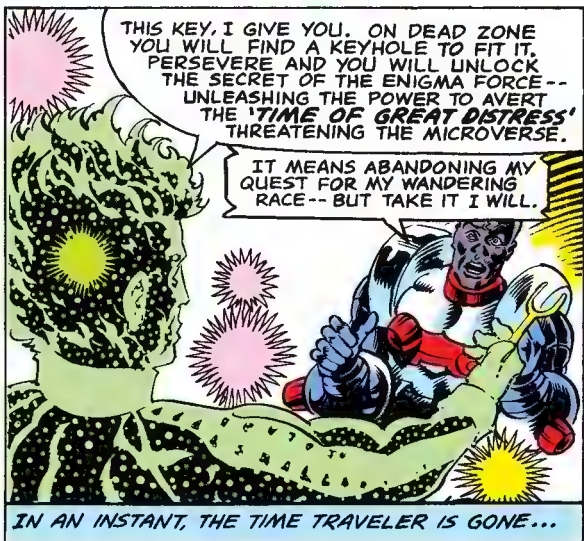
MY TIME IS ALMOST
DONE AND SOON,
I WILL FADE INTO
OBLIVION.

THE KEY--?



THIS KEY, I GIVE YOU. ON DEAD ZONE
YOU WILL FIND A KEYHOLE TO FIT IT.
PERSEVERE AND YOU WILL UNLOCK
THE SECRET OF THE ENIGMA FORCE--
UNLEASHING THE POWER TO AVERT
THE 'TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS'
THREATENING THE MICROVERSE.

IT MEANS ABANDONING MY
QUEST FOR MY WANDERING
RACE-- BUT TAKE IT I WILL.



IN AN INSTANT, THE TIME TRAVELER IS GONE...



MEANWHILE, IN THE VOID BETWEEN DIMENSIONS IS A MAN OF THE LARGER MACROVERSE-- OF EARTH-- DR. STRANGE, WHO IS AT HOME WHEREVER HIS MYSTIC ARTS CARRY HIM. THIS DAY HAS SEEN THE MYSTIC MASTER VISIT EARTH'S DIM PAST AS HE SOUGHT TO UNRAVEL A MYSTERY POSED BY AN ANCIENT OBELISK SCRIBED IN A LANGUAGE UNKNOWN TO SCHOLARS.

GRANTED GREAT POWERS BY A SWORD EMBEDDED IN A GLOWING STAR-- THE CITY'S PRINCE-- WAYFINDER-- REDUCED HIS SUBJECTS IN SIZE, AND FLED WITH THEM INTO A SUBATOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM.

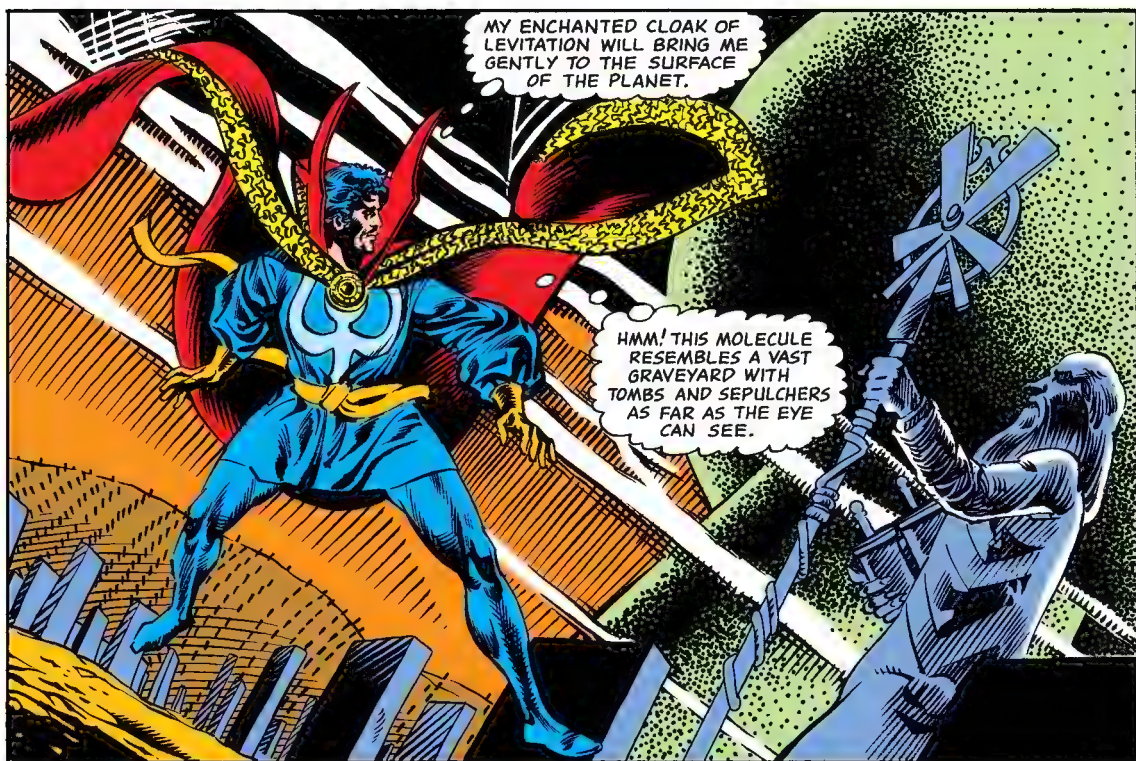
I WITNESSED AN ASSAULT ON AN ANCIENT CITY WHOSE SCIENCE WAS SO ADVANCED AS TO MAKE ITS INHABITANTS SEEM AS GODS!

STILL IN ALL, 'T WAS NOT ENOUGH TO PREVAIL AGAINST THE SWIRLING DEMONS WHO SOUGHT TO DESTROY THEM.

*SEE ISSUE # 31. -- TOM.

THAT HAPPENED UNTOLD EONS AGO. NOW, I SHALL FOLLOW THE ESCAPE ROUTE OPENED THROUGH THE SPACEWALL-- THE BARRIER BETWEEN WORLDS-- TO DISCOVER THE FATE OF THOSE FIRST VOYAGERS TO...

...THE MICROVERSE!
THERE! A MOLECULAR WORLD COMES INTO VIEW!



NEXT ISSUE: BY BROTHER BETRAYED!

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP



THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE



THE MICRONAUTS

THIS DAY
I DECLARE THAT
THE MICRONAUTS
AND ALL WHO
BEFRIEND THEM--

--ARE OUTLAWS
AND TRAITORS TO
THE MICROVERSE!



448



LAYTON/AMC/NATV

Somewhere beyond the Spacewall — a barrier in space and time — there exists a subatomic solar system called the Microverse! Teeming with molecular planets and a myriad of races, it has produced heroes minute in size... but mighty beyond measure!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

'A time of great distress' threatens the Microverse! Having lost all contact to the one thing that can protect them, the awesome Enigma Force, the peoples of this submicroscopic solar system face imminent extinction! Locating two of the three keys needed to revive the sentient Force, the mighty Micronauts defy certain death as they race across the molecular planet of Homeworld...



RANN

MICROTRON

MARI

BUG

ACROYEAR

PHAROID

DEVIL

FIREFLYTE

SHREW! WE GO FROM WATER,
TA SNOW, TA ÆTIK'S SAND!
AIN'T THERE NO END TA
THIS ÆTIK'S PLANET!

HOMEWORLD IS VAST,
BUG, COMPRISED OF
MANY MOLECULAR
ZONES, EACH ONE
DIFFERENT FROM
THE NEXT.

WE'VE ALREADY
VISITED SEAZONE
AND SUBZERO
ZONE IN OUR
SEARCH FOR THE
FIRST AND SECOND
KEYS TO THE
ENIGMA FORCE.

NOW OUR
QUEST LEADS US
TO SANDZONE,
AND PHAROID'S
KINGDOM OF
AEGYPTA.

GUEST-
STARRING:
DR. STRANGE

BETRAYAL!

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK
WRITER PENCILER
STORYTELLERS

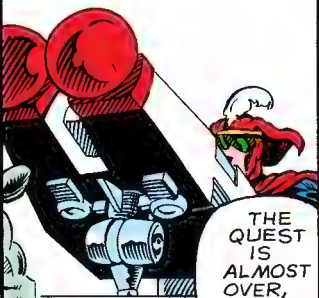
DANNY BULANADI
INKER

D. ALBERS, LETTERS
B. SHAREN, COLORS

TOM DE FALCO
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
OVERSEER

AT THE HELM OF THE ASTROSTATION, COMMANDER RANN ALLOWS A SMILE TO PLAY ACROSS HIS LIPS...



THE QUEST IS ALMOST OVER, MICRO-NAUTS!



THE THIRD KEY HAS BEEN FOUND, AND BY OUR FELLOW MICRONAUT--ACROYEAR!

"THAT'S THE NEWS THAT WAS IMPARTED TO ME WHEN WE LANDED IN TROPICA--THE HOME MOLECULE OF A RACE OF DEVILS...



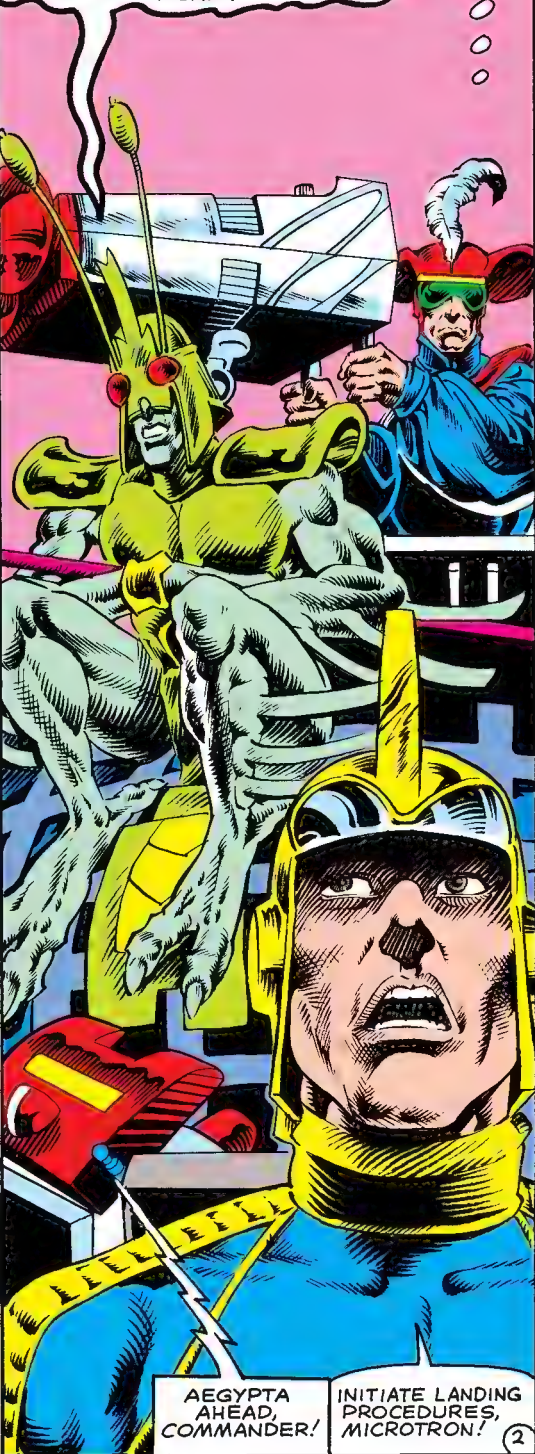
"I WAITED UNTIL IT WAS CONFIRMED BY COMMUNIQUE FROM AEGYPTA BEFORE TELLING YOU!"



"THE DEVILS SAID THAT HE LEFT THEIR CITY WITH THE KEY AND ONE OF THEIR OWN AS HIS COMPANION. HE PLANS TO MEET US AT OUR RENDEZVOUS POINT IN AEGYPTA!"

AEGYPTA WHERE, IN THE PRESENCE OF MY OWN PEOPLE, I MUST BETRAY THESE CHAMPIONS OF THE MICROVERSE, WHO I HAVE COME TO HONOR AND... LOVE!

WA-HOO! ACROYEAR'S BACK ON HOMEWORLD ËTIK Ë PART OF OUR QUEST ËTIK AN' A MICRONAUT AGAIN!

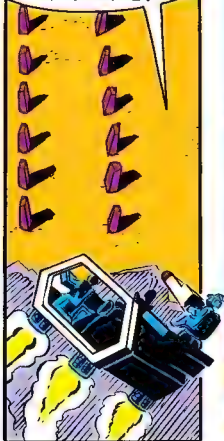


AEGYPTA AHEAD, COMMANDER!

INITIATE LANDING PROCEDURES, MICROTRON!

(2)

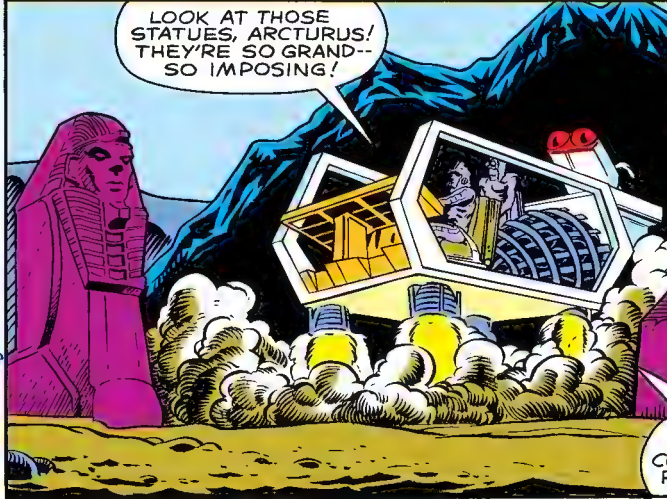
KING ARGON--THE RULER OF ALL HOMEWORLD WILL MEET US HERE! IT WILL BE GOOD TO BE BACK AMONG FRIENDS!



KICKING UP THE SANDS OF THE GREAT SYANITE DESERT, THE ASTROSTATION SETS THE MICRONAUTS DOWN IN THE CENTER OF THE AVENUE OF ANCESTORS, A BROAD BYWAY LEADING TO THE ENTRANCE OF SUBTERRANEAN AEGYPTA.

LOOK AT THOSE STATUES, ARCTURUS! THEY'RE SO GRAND--SO IMPOSING!

LEGEND HAS IT THAT THEY ARE *NOT* STATUES, MILADY MARIONETTE, BUT TOMBS.



TOMBS, PHAROID? THEN THE CORPSES THEY CONTAIN MUST BE THE REMAINS OF GIANTS!

SUCH ARE THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF HOMEWORLD --OUR ANCESTORS--SAID TO HAVE BEEN.

A NICE FAIRY TALE! AH, IT'S GOOD TO STRETCH MY LEGS!

UH, COM-MANDER--



--IT LOOKS LIKE THE DESERT'S JUST COUGHED UP Σ TIC Σ TROUBLE!



IT'S ALL RIGHT, BUG! THEY'RE KING ARGON'S *REVOLUTIONARY GUARD*. UNDOUBTEDLY COME TO GREET US!

ARCTURUS, SOMETHING'S WRONG! THE *REVOLUTIONARY GUARD* NEVER WORE THE UNIFORM OF BARON KARZA'S *DOG SOLDIERS* BEFORE!

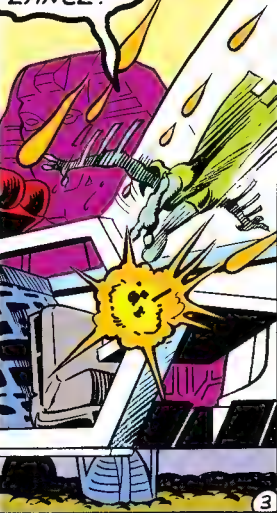


SUDDENLY...

HOLY SHREW! THOSE Σ TIC Σ STORM-TROOPERS HAVE STUNNED THE 'NAUTS WITH LASER SONICS--BUT I MANAGED TO JUMP OUTTA THE WAY!



I'VE GOTTA REACH MY *ROCKET-LANCE*!





I'M SORRY, BUG,
BUT I CANNOT
ALLOW YOU TO OB-
TAIN YOUR WEAPON!

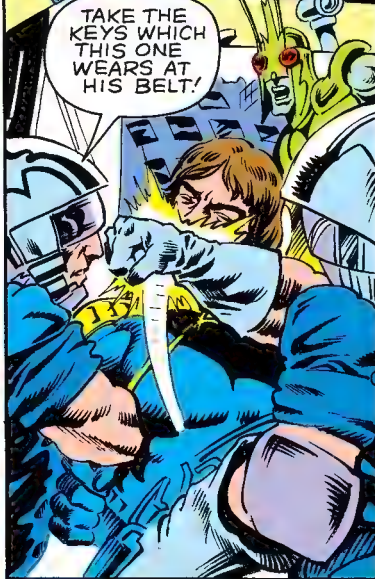


PHAROID--
YER TURNIN'
YER STICKS
STAR SCEPTER
ON A FELLOW
MICRONAUT?!!?

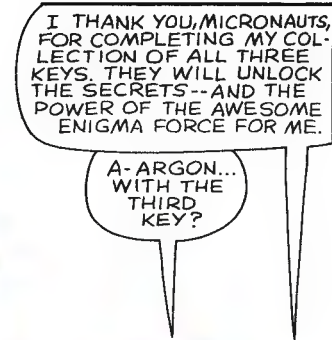


THIS RECEPTION
WAS ORDERED
BY HOMEWORLD'S
KING! I CAN
BUT OBEY!

ZAT MEAN
YA GONNA
LET STIK?
THE COM-
MANDER
GET BEAT
UP?



TAKE THE
KEYS WHICH
THIS ONE
WEARS AT
HIS BELT!



I THANK YOU, MICRONAUTS,
FOR COMPLETING MY COL-
LECTION OF ALL THREE
KEYS. THEY WILL UNLOCK
THE SECRETS--AND THE
POWER OF THE AWESOME
ENIGMA FORCE FOR ME.

A- ARGON...
WITH THE
THIRD
KEY?

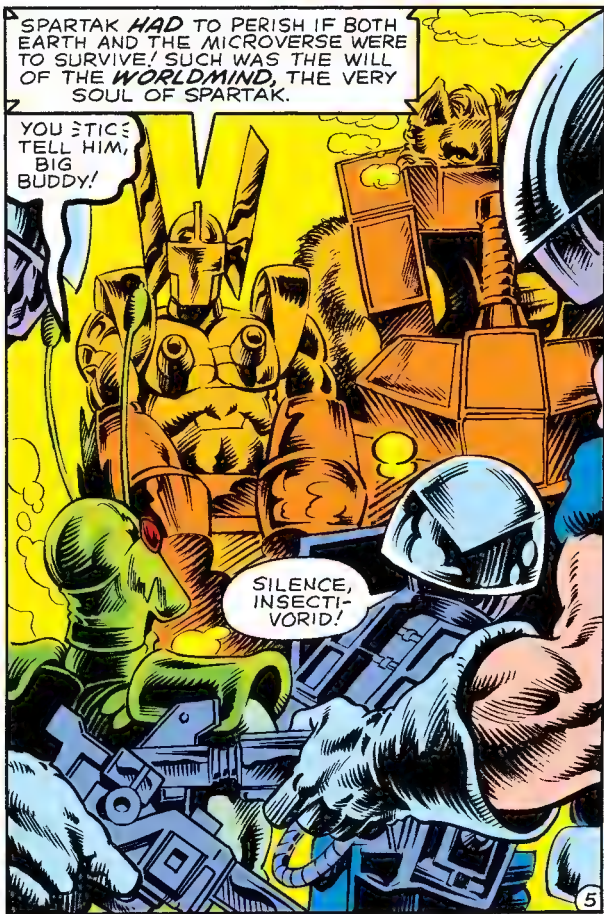


THAT MEANS
YOU ALREADY
HAVE...ACRO-
YEAR!



OF COURSE. MY PATROLS
DISCOVERED HIM AND HIS
SAVAGE COMPANION WHILE
THEY WERE CROSSING THE
SYANITE DESERT. THEY
RESISTED, BUT NOT
FOR LONG.

FEAR NOT. THE
STASIS SHACKLES
ONLY SAP THEIR
INCREDIBLE
STRENGTH, AND
WILL NOT HARM
THEM--UNLESS
THEY STRUGGLE
TO BE FREE.



CUTTING OFF ALL FURTHER CONVERSATION, THE KING OF HOMEWORLD ORDERS THE MICRONAUTS PLACED UNDER GUARD. HIS BETROTHED, THE FORMER REVOLUTIONARY, LADY SLUG--PROTESTS.

ARGON, I KNEW NOT YOUR PURPOSE IN COMING TO AEGYPTA. EVEN NOW I CANNOT BELIEVE YOUR BETRAYAL OF THE MICRONAUTS WHO HAVE EVER SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY!

I AM MERELY PLACING THEM UNDER PROTECTIVE CUSTODY, MILADY SLUG--

--WHILE MY SCIENTISTS FATHOM THE WORKINGS OF THE THREE KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE. AS FOR MY 'BETRAYAL', THE SAFETY OF THE MICROVERSE HANGS ON MY JUDGMENT.

I MUST RULE AS A KING, NO MATTER HOW HEARTLESS MY EDICTS MAY SEEM.

IS THIS THE MAN I AM TO MARRY? POWER SEEMS TO HAVE GONE TO HIS HEAD!

I CAN WASTE NO TIME ON WORDS, MILADY. BUT REMEMBER, HEAVY HANGS THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN.

OR, MADNESS OVERTAKES THOSE WHO ASSUME THE MANTLE OF MONARCHY!

MARGRACE! WITH ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED, I HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO GREET YOU--CAPTAIN OF MY DESERT DEMONS--AND YOU, LADY SLUG!

'SCUSE ME, BOYO, BUT MY OSTRA'S KICKIN' UP A FUSS--LIKE HE SMELLS SOMETHIN' ROTTEN!

I GOTTA GET HIM OUT TO THE DESERT WHERE THE AIR'S SWEETER!

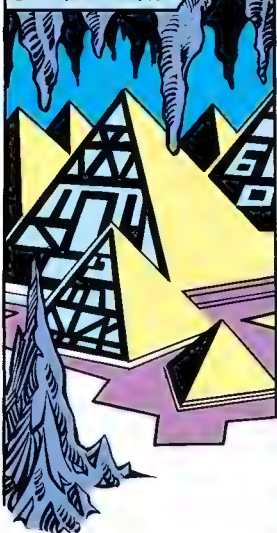
WAIT! I SHALL JOIN YOU!

AS MARGRACE AND THE LADY SLUG DESERT HIM--PRINCE PHAROID LEARNS THE BITTER PRICE OF BETRAYING ONE'S FRIENDS...

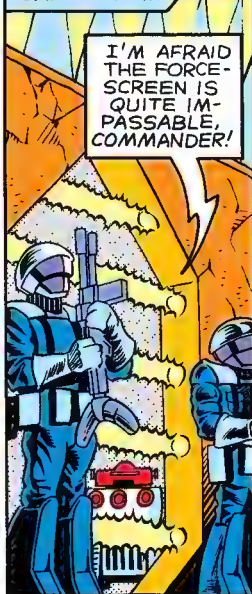
THEY... CAN'T LOOK ME SQUARELY IN THE EYES! I DID BUT OBEY MY KING, AS ANY SOLDIER MUST! BUT WAS I RIGHT TO DO SO?



EGYPTA IS AN UNDERGROUND CITY NESTLED IN THE COOL DARK BENEATH THE DESERTS OF SANDZONE.



HERE, THE MICRONAUTS CHAFF AT CAPTIVITY...



I'M AFRAID THE FORCE-SCREEN IS QUITE IMPASSABLE, COMMANDER!

ANY HUMAN ATTEMPTING TO PASS THROUGH IT WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE NEURO-SHOCKED INTO OBLIVION--NOT TO MENTION BLASTED BY THOSE DOG SOLDIER SENTRIES!



ALL RIGHT, MICROTRON.

I USED TA BE A MASTER THIEF BACK ON TIK-KALIKLAK, ACROYEAR!

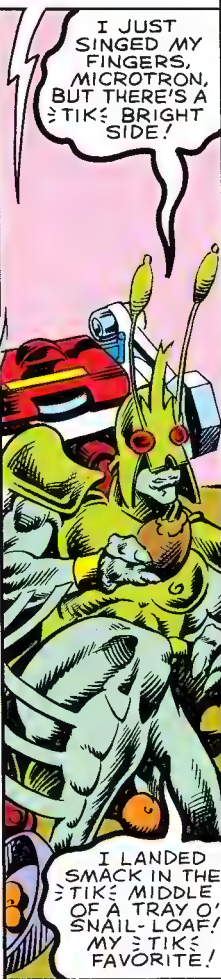
LEMME SEE IF I CAN PICK THE TIK-K LOCK KEEPIN' YA CHAINED INTA THESE TIK-K STASIS...
YEEOWWWW!

BUG!



THE POWER FEEDBACK'S HURLED HIM TOWARDS THE TABLE!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MASTER BUG?



I JUST SINGED MY FINGERS, MICROTRON, BUT THERE'S A TIK-K BRIGHT SIDE!

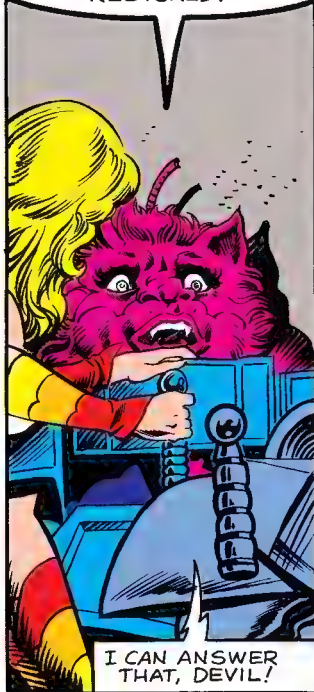
I LANDED SMACK IN THE TIK-K MIDDLE OF A TRAY O' SNAIL-LOAF! MY TIK-K FAVORITE!

I'M GLAD YOU CAN FIND SOMETHING TO LAUGH ABOUT, BUG, BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! ARGON'S OBVIOUSLY BECOME AS POWER-MAD AS HIS PREDECESSOR, BARON KARZA--



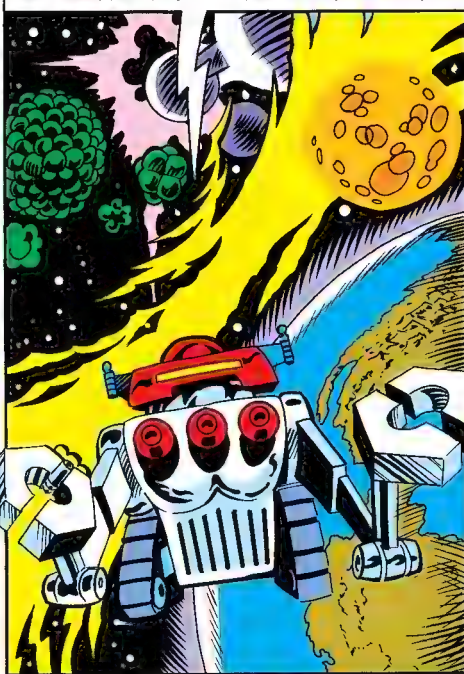
--AND HE HOLDS THE THREE KEYS TO THE SECRET OF THE ENIGMA FORCE WHICH, IF NOT UNLOCKED IN TIME, COULD MEAN THE END OF THE MICROVERSE!

PARDON ME, COMMANDER RANN, BUT WE DEVILS OF MIRTHRIA LIVED A BIT OFF THE BEATEN TRACK! PRECISELY *WHAT* WILL HAPPEN IF CONTACT WITH THE ENIGMA FORCE ISN'T RESTORED?



I CAN ANSWER THAT, DEVIL!

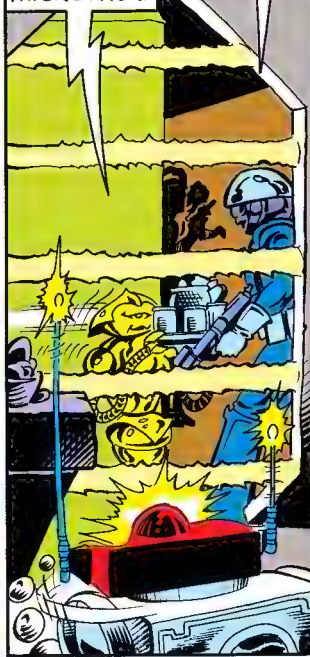
THE ENIGMA FORCE IS THE POWER THAT PREVENTS OUR MICROVERSE FROM MERGING--VIOLENTLY-- WITH THE GREATER MACROVERSE BEYOND THE SPACEWALL! SINCE NO TWO UNIVERSES CAN OCCUPY THE SAME SPACE AND TIME, SUCH A MERGER COULD WELL DESTROY BOTH. IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF... EVERYTHING!



SUDDENLY, THERE IS A DISTURBANCE AT THE CELL DOOR...

BUT I MUST BRING THIS LUBRICANT TO THE ROBOD MICROTRON!

NO ONE SEES THE PRISONERS WITHOUT A PASS!



I HAVE COME WITH A PASS... FROM THE *REBELLION!*

NANOTRON'S BLINDED ONE DOG SOLDIER SENTRY, MARGRACE!



AND I'VE DOWNED THE SECOND, LADY SLUG!

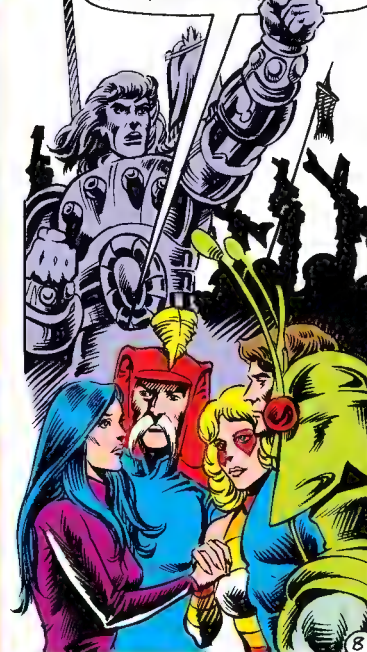
SECONDS LATER, THE FORCE-SCREEN ACROSS THE CELL DOOR IS SHUT DOWN, AND...

THE REBELLION, EH? I THOUGHT THAT ENDED WHEN WE OVERTHREW BARON KARZA!

SO DID I, COMMANDER-- BUT ALL IS NOT WELL ON HOMEWORLD!



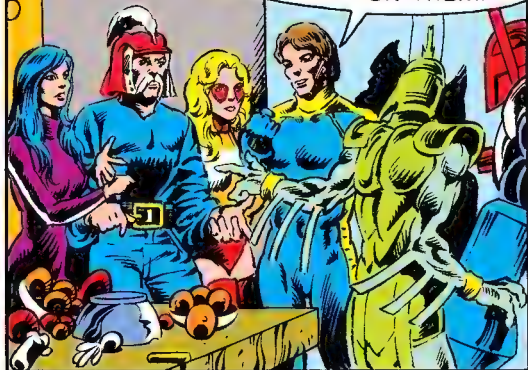
SINCE THE START OF YOUR QUEST, ARGON HAS GROWN MORE IRRATIONAL-- SEEING ENEMIES WHERE THERE WERE ONLY FRIENDS! MANY HAVE ALREADY BEEN IMPRISONED! I HAD HOPED HIS POWERLUST WAS BUT A TEMPORARY MADNESS. BUT...



ARGON HAS REOPENED BARON KARZA'S BODY BANKS, AND WORD HAS IT HIS SCIENTISTS HAVE RESUMED GENETIC EXPERIMENTATION-- ON ANYONE CONSIDERED AN **'ENEMY OF THE REALM'!**

HOW? HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

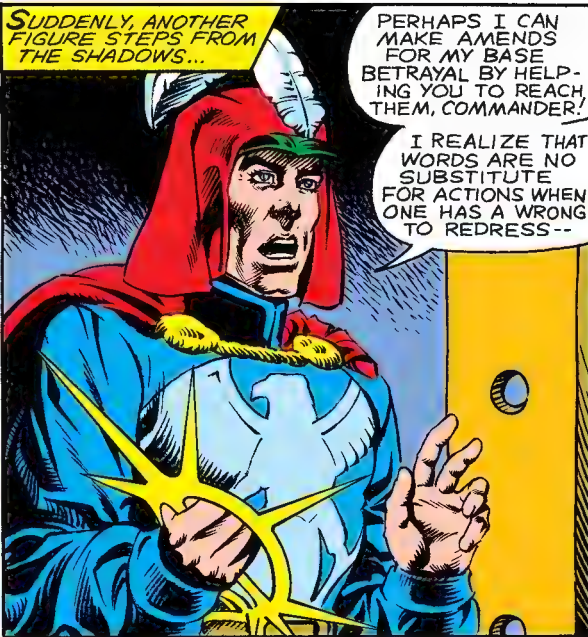
MARI! IT APPEARS AS IF YOUR BROTHER HAS BEEN CORRUPTED BY ABSOLUTE POWER! I'M SORRY! NOW WE MUST RETRIEVE THE THREE KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE! THE FATE OF THE MICROVERSE HANGS ON THEM!



SUDDENLY, ANOTHER FIGURE STEPS FROM THE SHADOWS...

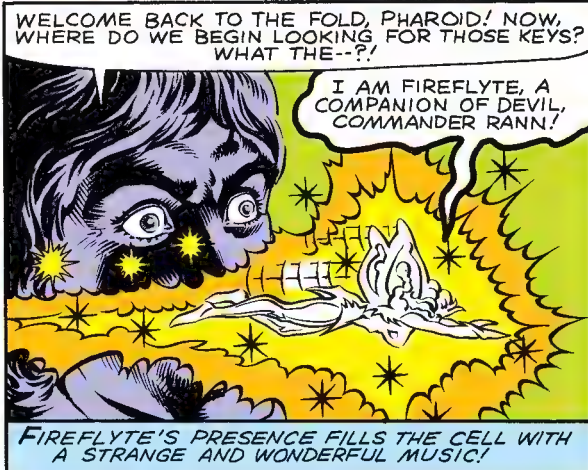
PERHAPS I CAN MAKE AMENDS FOR MY BASE BETRAYAL BY HELPING YOU TO REACH THEM, COMMANDER!

I REALIZE THAT WORDS ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTIONS WHEN ONE HAS A WRONG TO REDRESS--



WELCOME BACK TO THE FOLD, PHAROID! NOW, WHERE DO WE BEGIN LOOKING FOR THOSE KEYS? WHAT THE--?!

I AM FIREFLYTE, A COMPANION OF DEVIL, COMMANDER RANN!



FIREFLYTE'S PRESENCE FILLS THE CELL WITH A STRANGE AND WONDERFUL MUSIC!

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, FIREFLYTE?

I THOUGHT IT BEST TO REMAIN HIDDEN, DEVIL--

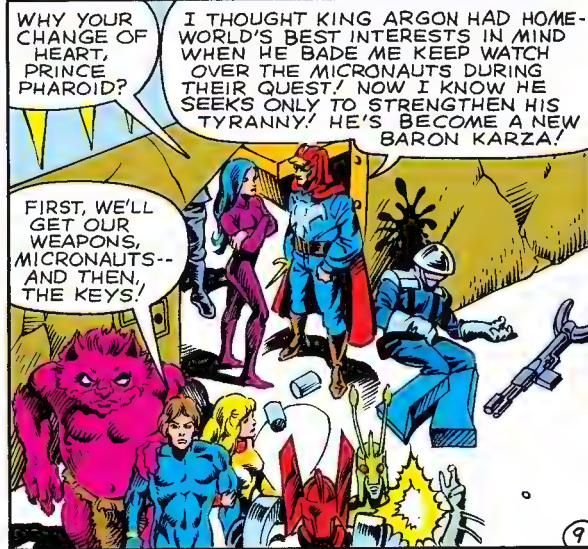


--UNTIL I COULD DISCOVER WHERE THE THREE KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE HAD BEEN TAKEN! FOLLOW ME, AND I SHALL TAKE YOU TO THEM!

WHY YOUR CHANGE OF HEART, PRINCE PHAROID?

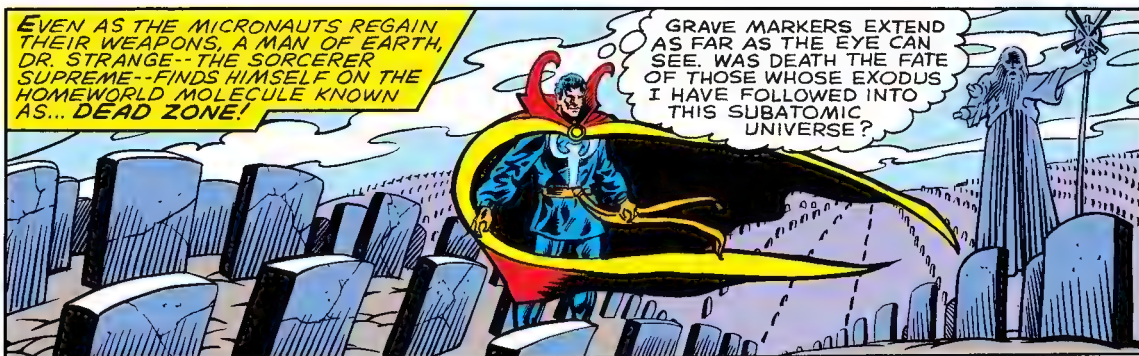
I THOUGHT KING ARGON HAD HOME-WORLD'S BEST INTERESTS IN MIND WHEN HE BADE ME KEEP WATCH OVER THE MICRONAUTS DURING THEIR QUEST! NOW I KNOW HE SEEKS ONLY TO STRENGTHEN HIS TYRANNY! HE'S BECOME A NEW BARON KARZA!

FIRST, WE'LL GET OUR WEAPONS, MICRONAUTS-- AND THEN, THE KEYS!





EVEN AS THE MICRONAUTS REGAIN THEIR WEAPONS, A MAN OF EARTH, DR. STRANGE--THE SORCERER SUPREME--FINDS HIMSELF ON THE HOMEWORLD MOLECULE KNOWN AS... DEAD ZONE!



GRAVE MARKERS EXTEND AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE. WAS DEATH THE FATE OF THOSE WHOSE EXODUS I HAVE FOLLOWED INTO THIS SUBATOMIC UNIVERSE?

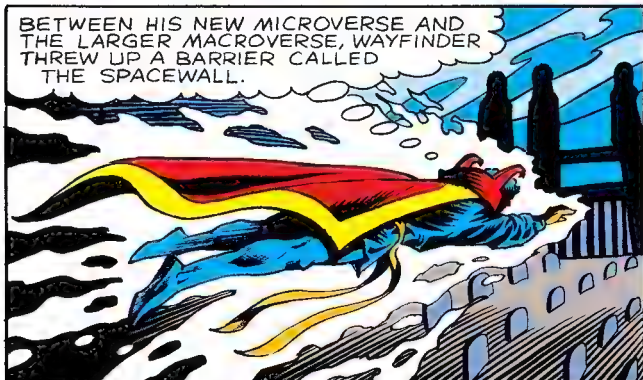
MY JOURNEY BEGAN WITH THE UNEARTHING OF AN ANCIENT OBELISK IN INDIA, INSCRIBED IN A PRE-SANSKRIT SCRIPT!

I PROJECTED MY ASTRAL FORM BACK INTO THE OBELISK'S PAST AND CAME UPON A CITY OF ALIENS--BESET BY SWIRLING DEMONS FROM OUT OF EARTH'S PREHISTORY.

THOUGH ARMED WITH MIRACULOUS WEAPONS, THE CITY'S DEFENDERS COULD NOT LONG HOLD OUT AGAINST THE DEMON HORDES...

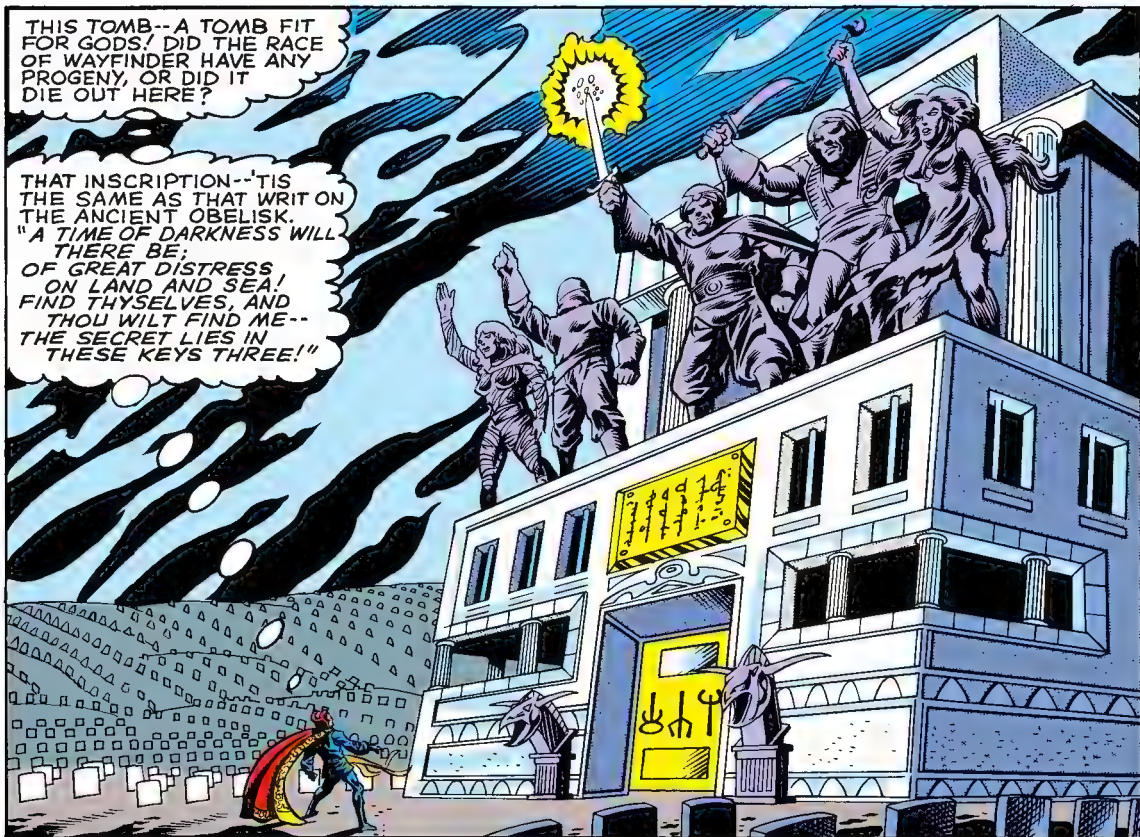
...SO THEIR SOVEREIGN--PRINCE WAYFINDER--PETITIONED A GLOWING **SWORD** EMBEDDED IN A **STAR** FOR AID. THE SWORD PASSED ITS POWER INTO THE PRINCE, AND HE OPENED A PORTAL IN SPACE THROUGH WHICH HE LED HIS PEOPLE INTO A MICROVERSE OF HIS OWN CREATION.

BETWEEN HIS NEW MICROVERSE AND THE LARGER MACROVERSE, WAYFINDER THREW UP A BARRIER CALLED THE SPACEWALL.



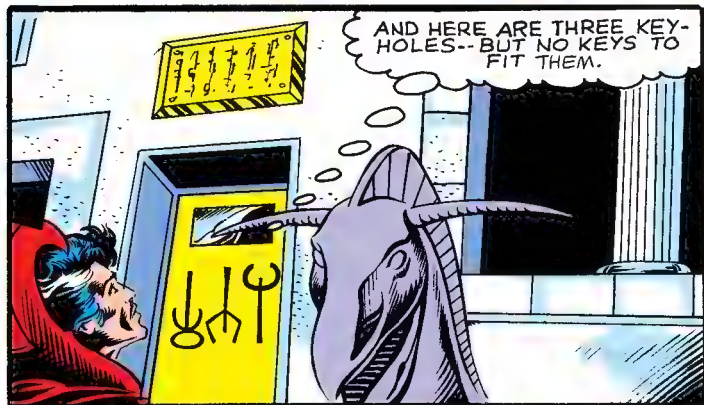
YET, DID WAYFINDER AND HIS PEOPLE FLEE ONE DOOM, ONLY TO MEET DESTRUCTION OF ANOTHER KIND?



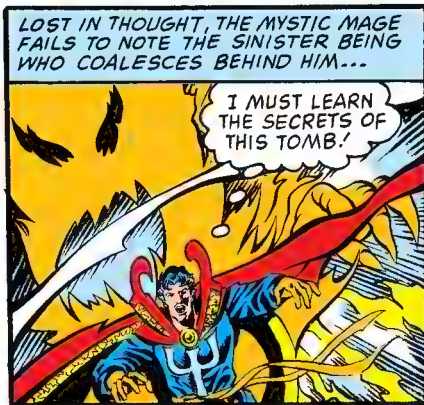


THIS TOMB-- A TOMB FIT FOR GODS! DID THE RACE OF WAYFINDER HAVE ANY PROGENY, OR DID IT DIE OUT HERE?

THAT INSCRIPTION-- 'TIS THE SAME AS THAT WRIT ON THE ANCIENT OBELISK. "A TIME OF DARKNESS WILL THERE BE; OF GREAT DISTRESS ON LAND AND SEA! FIND THYSELVES, AND THOU WILT FIND ME-- THE SECRET LIES IN THESE KEYS THREE!"

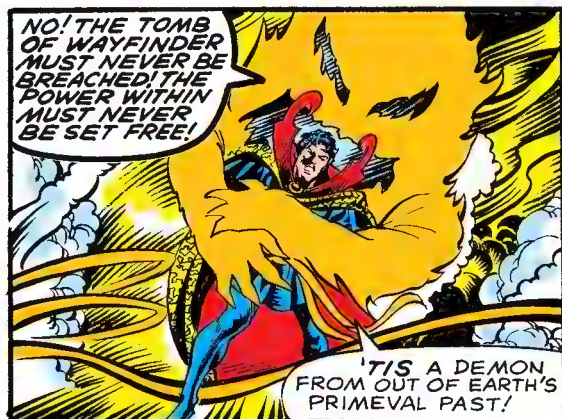


AND HERE ARE THREE KEY-HOLES-- BUT NO KEYS TO FIT THEM.



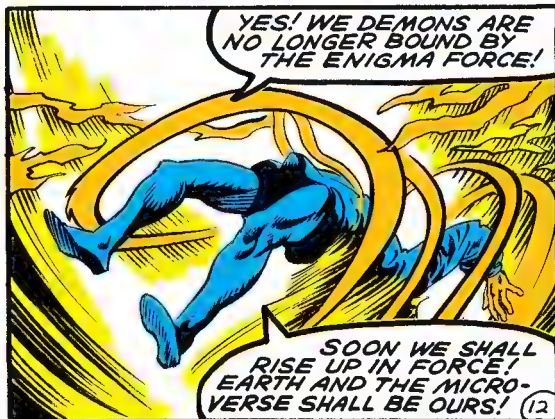
LOST IN THOUGHT, THE MYSTIC MAGE FAILS TO NOTE THE SINISTER BEING WHO COALESCE BEHIND HIM...

I MUST LEARN THE SECRETS OF THIS TOMB!



NO! THE TOMB OF WAYFINDER MUST NEVER BE BREACHED! THE POWER WITHIN MUST NEVER BE SET FREE!

'TIS A DEMON FROM OUT OF EARTH'S PRIMEVAL PAST!



YES! WE DEMONS ARE NO LONGER BOUND BY THE ENIGMA FORCE!

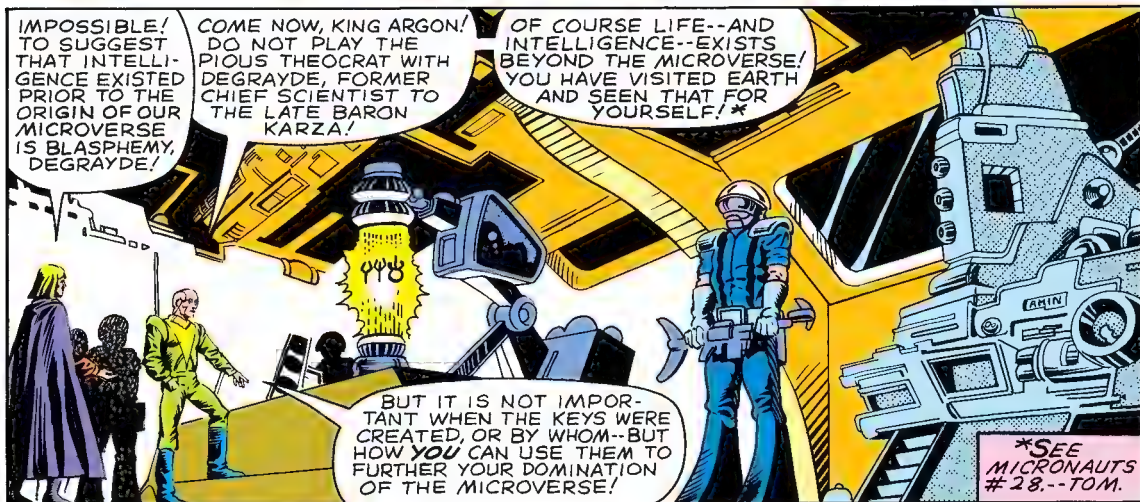
SOON WE SHALL RISE UP IN FORCE! EARTH AND THE MICRO-VERSE SHALL BE OURS! (12)



MEAN-
WHILE, IN
THE COOL
CAVERNS OF
AEGYPTA...

THE KEYS ARE
OF A METAL
UNKNOWN ON
HOMEWORLD,
KING ARGON.

INDEED THEY MAY BE
EVEN **OLDER** THAN THE
MICROVERSE ITSELF!



IMPOSSIBLE!
TO SUGGEST
THAT INTELLI-
GENCE EXISTED
PRIOR TO THE
ORIGIN OF OUR
MICROVERSE
IS BLASPHEMY,
DEGRAYDE!

COME NOW, KING ARGON!
DO NOT PLAY THE
PIOUS THEOCRAT WITH
DEGRAYDE, FORMER
CHIEF SCIENTIST TO
THE LATE BARON
KARZA!

OF COURSE LIFE--AND
INTELLIGENCE--EXISTS
BEYOND THE MICROVERSE!
YOU HAVE VISITED EARTH
AND SEEN THAT FOR
YOURSELF! *

BUT IT IS NOT IMPOR-
TANT WHEN THE KEYS WERE
CREATED, OR BY WHOM--BUT
HOW **YOU** CAN USE THEM TO
FURTHER YOUR DOMINATION
OF THE MICROVERSE!

*SEE
MICRONAUTS
28.--TOM.



YES! THE KEYS HAVE
THE POWER TO MAKE ME
FORCE COMMANDER OF
THE ENTIRE MICROVERSE!
DID THEY NOT TRANSFORM
THE PEOPLE OF SEAZONE
INTO MEN-FISH?

COULD THEY
NOT HAVE SAVED
POLARIA HAD
THEIR WIELDER,
PRICE PEACOCK,
NOT BEEN TOO
WEAK--WILLED
TO USE THEM?



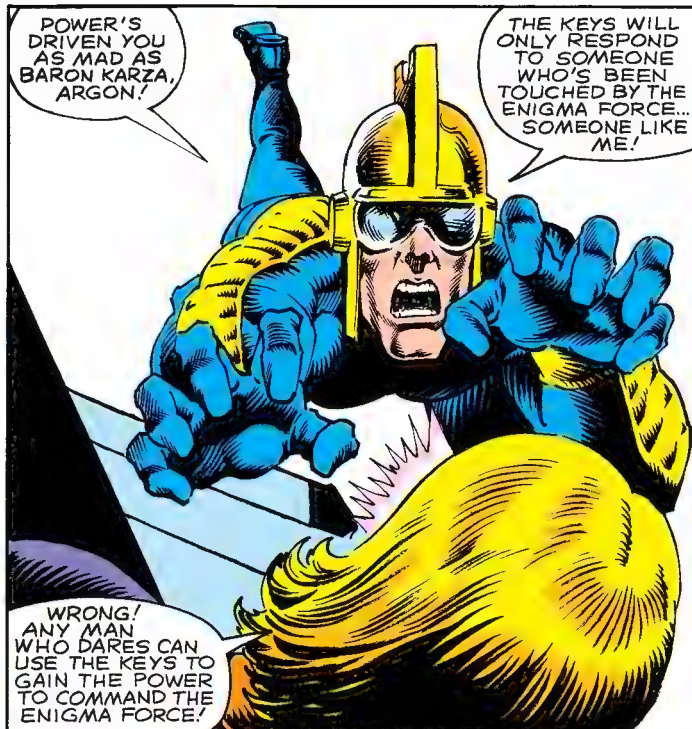
YES, THE KEYS
TO THE ENIGMA
FORCE POSSESS
ENORMOUS POWER,
KING OF HOMEWORLD.

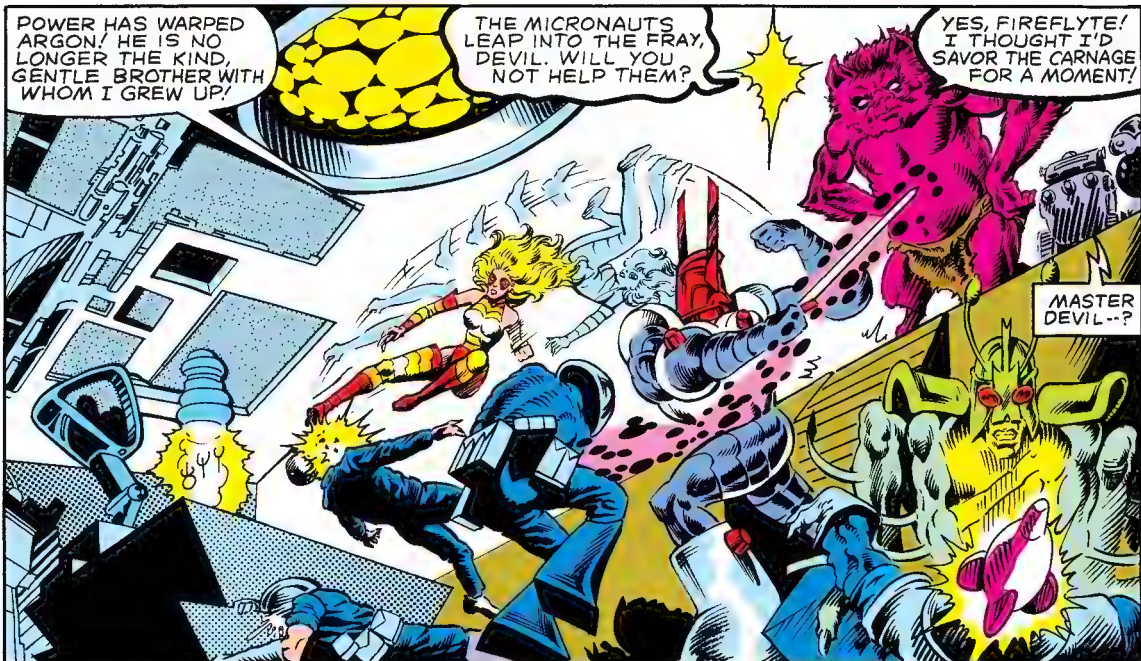
TOO MUCH
FOR SOME
PEOPLE TO
GET THEIR
HANDS ON!

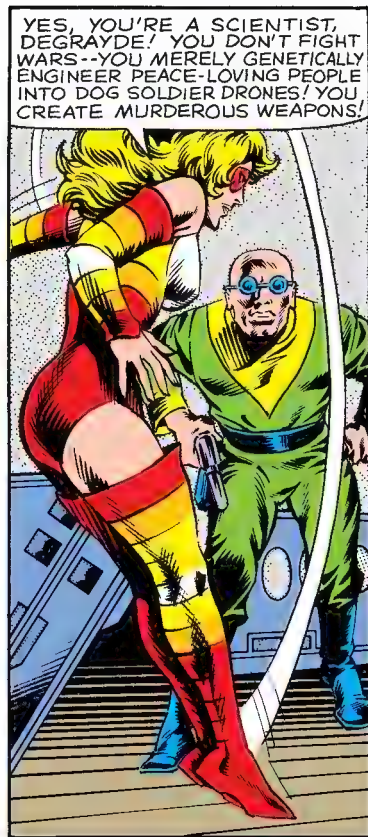
WE'RE NOT
3TIK 5
MENTIONIN'
ANY NAMES,
O'COURSE!

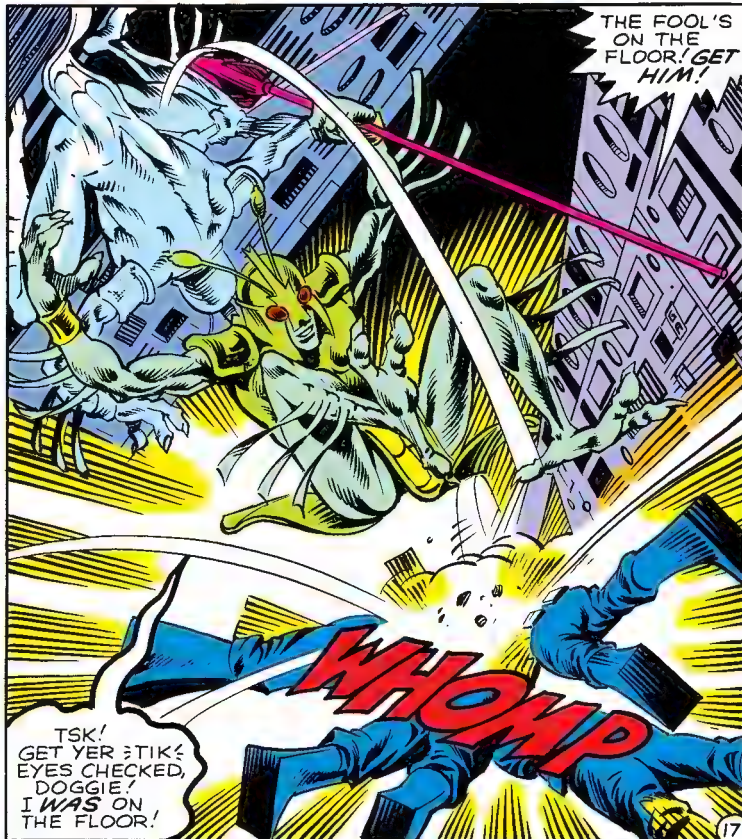
THE
MICRO-
NAUTS!

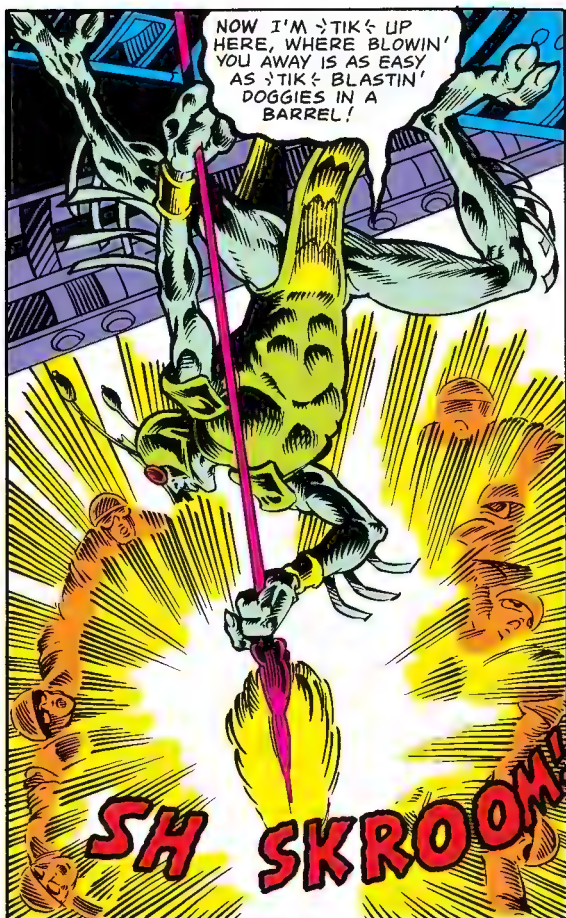
13











NOW I'M 3TIK3 UP
HERE, WHERE BLOWIN'
YOU AWAY IS AS EASY
AS 3TIK3 BLASTIN'
DOGGIES IN A
BARREL!

SH SKROOM!



MEANWHILE...

BE FEARED, COMMANDER! YOU
WERE THE UNCONSCIOUS BEARER
OF THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE-- PERSONIFIED IN THE
TIME TRAVELERS WHO
SPRUNG FULL-BLOWN FROM
YOUR MIND-- AND BROUGHT
ABOUT THE FIRST DEFEAT
OF BARON KARZA!



BUT KARZA RESURRECTED HIM-
SELF AND MIND-BOUND YOU
AND THE TIME TRAVELERS! WHEN
KARZA MET DEFEAT A SECOND
TIME, THE TIME TRAVELERS WERE
DESTROYED!



THAT MEANT THAT YOU COULD
NO LONGER CONTACT THE
ENIGMA FORCE! YOU WERE NO
LONGER A MAN TO BE FEARED!

YOU WERE
REDUCED TO
BEING A MAN
LIKE ANY
OTHER MAN,
MY DEAR
COMMANDER--



-- AND, LIKE ANY MAN,
YOU CAN BE DESTROYED!

WHAT--?
SINGING?!!





EACH MAN DEFINES THE TERMS OF HIS OWN EXISTENCE, COMMANDER.

AYE THAT'S ONE SONG I'LL ECHO FROM EXPERIENCE, FAIR FIREFLYTE!

I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO.

LET'S GET THOSE KEYS!



WE'VE GOT TO NEGATE THE FORCE-SCREEN AROUND THE KEYS AND GET OUT OF HERE FAST!

LEAVE THAT TO ME, COMMANDER.



SILLAILILLAI SREEEEEEEEEEEE

SACRED SOUL OF SEPSIS! FIREFLYTE'S SONG IS SHUTTING DOWN THE SCREEN! SHE'S ABSORBING ITS ENERGY!



WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE ARE YOU, FIREFLYTE?

I AM MERELY A CHILD OF THE ENIGMA FORCE, AS ARE WE ALL.

TAKE THE KEYS, COMMANDER. AS ONE WHO HAS WIELDED THE ENIGMA FORCE, ERE NOW, YOU CAN SENSE ITS POWER HUMMING IN YOUR HANDS.



YES! YES! BUT WHAT DO I DO WITH IT? WAIT! THE KEYS--THEY'RE COMMUNICATING WITH ME...

FOR A BRIEF SECOND, COMMANDER ARCTURUS RANN IS SILENT. THEN, HIS EYES AGLOW, HE SPEAKS A FATEFUL PRONOUNCEMENT TO HIS FELLOW MICRONAUTS.



THE 'TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS' IS ALMOST UPON US! IF WE ARE TO SAVE THE MICROVERSE, WE MUST FIGHT OUR WAY TO--

--DEAD ZONE!

AS ONE, THE MICRONAUTS HEAVE A COLLECTIVE GASP!

EXPECTING TO FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH TO THEIR ASTRO-STATION, THE MICRONAUTS BREAK FROM THE SUB-SANDZONE CITY OF AEGYPTA TO FIND...



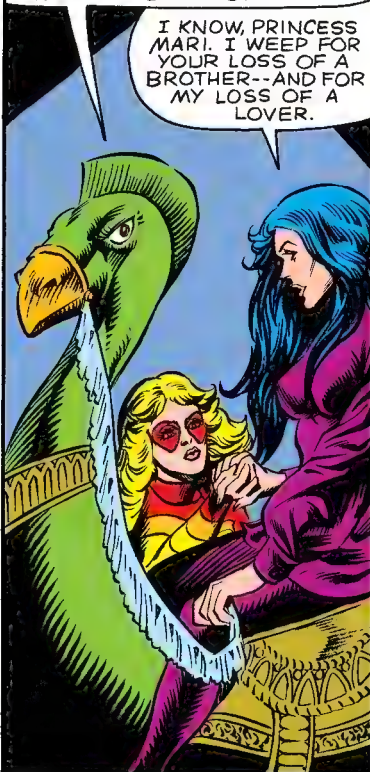
PRINCE PHAROID AND HIS DESERT DEMONS! THEY'VE TOTALLED THE DOG SOLDIER SENTRIES!

I SEE YOU HAVE THE THREE KEYS, COMMANDER!



PARTING GIFTS FROM A RELUCTANT FORCE COMMANDER, PHAROID!

OH, SLUG, THERE IS NO TRACE LEFT IN ARGON OF THE NOBLE MAN WE BOTH LOVED.



I KNOW, PRINCESS MARI. I WEEP FOR YOUR LOSS OF A BROTHER--AND FOR MY LOSS OF A LOVER.

THEN, AS THE OTHER MICRONAUTS PREPARE TO BOARD THEIR AWAITING ASTROSTATION...



MICROTRON! I NEED YOU AND NANOTRON TO PERFORM AN IMPORTANT MISSION!

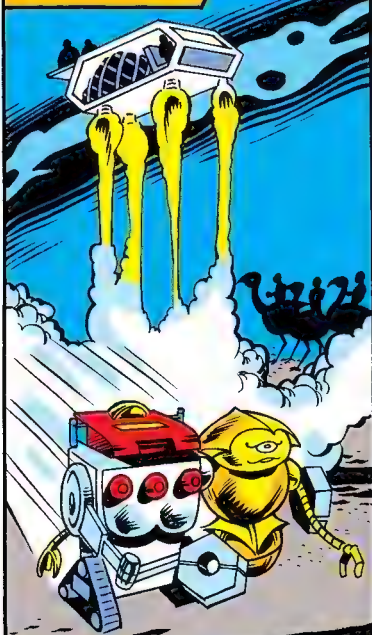
"OUR SPACE SHIP ENDEAVOR-- IS DRYDOCKED BACK IN FIRST ZONE. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONES WITH ANY HOPE OF TRAVERSING THE VAST SYANITE DESERT AND REACHING IT."



YEAH! THE REST OF US WOULD BE 3TIK5 FLASH-FRIED IN A DAY!

WE'LL RETRIEVE THE ENDEAVOR AND RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU IN DEAD ZONE! (21)

THEN, AS THE ASTROSTATION RISES, MICROTRON AND NANO-TRON WHIR AWAY ACROSS THE UNIMAGINABLE STRETCHES OF SANDZONE--



--WHILE PRINCE PHAROID PREPARES TO DELAY KING ARGON'S INEVITABLE PURSUIT!

SUDDENLY, FORCE COMMANDER'S DOG SOLDIERS EMERGE FROM AEGYPTA AND ENGAGE PRINCE PHAROID AND HIS DESERT DEMONS IN A BRIEF, BUT BITTER, BATTLE...



THE MICRO-NAUTS ARE GETTING AWAY!

THEY FLEE TO DEAD ZONE, TO ATTAIN THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE BY VIRTUE OF THE THREE KEYS!



AS LORD OF HOMEWORLD, SUCH POWER BELONGS TO ME-- AND ME ALONE!

THIS DAY I DO DECLARE THE MICRONAUTS AND ALL WHO BE-FRIEND THEM OUTLAWS AND TRAITORS TO THE REALM!



NOTHING SHALL KEEP THEM FROM MY VENGEANCE!

NEXT ISSUE THE *ORIGIN* OF THE *MICROVERSE!*

MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP

75¢

35

NOV
02714



WIN A *Columbia* TEN-SPEED
FORMULA 10 RACER!



DETAILS INSIDE

SPECIAL
DOUBLE-SIZED
ISSUE!

THE MICRONAUTS

THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



BOB LAYTON

THIS IS IT!
THE
ORIGIN
OF THE
MICROVERSE!

Separated from our reality by a barrier called the Spacewall, there exists a submicroscopic solar system called the Microverse. There, on the molecular planet Homeworld, a 'time of great distress' is about to come to a climax, threatening not only the Microverse, but the larger Macroverse as well. Only a small, hunted band of champions have any hope of staving off disaster...

Stan Lee
PRESENTS!

THE MICRONAUTS!

MARIONETTE

NANOTRON

COMMANDER
RANN

MICROTR

ACROYEAR

DEVIL

GUEST
STARRING:
DR. STRANGE

BUG

HANG ON TO YOUR HATS,
TRUE BELIEVER ...
THIS IS THE BIG ONE!

FIREFLY

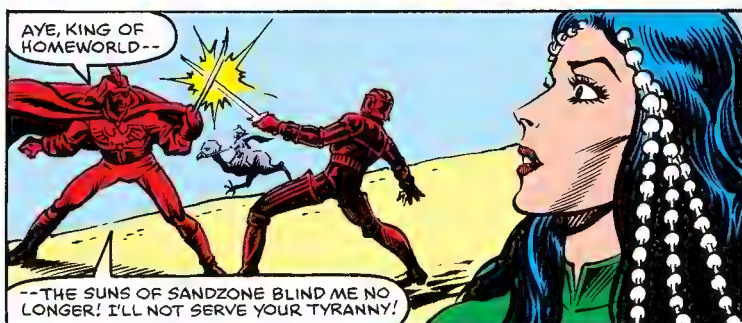
DOG SOLDIERS,
TO YOUR FIGHTERS!
THIS DAY DO I, ARGON--
FORCE COMMANDER AND
KING OF HOMEWORLD--
DECLARE THE MICRONAUTS
OUTLAWS AND TRAITORS
TO THE REALM!



SUDDENLY, ARGON'S EYES GROW WIDE AS HE SEES A FAMILIAR FIGURE RIDING WITH THE REBELLION-- HIS QUEEN TO BE... THE LADY SLUG!

ARGON, WITH HOMEWORLD AND THE MICROVERSE THREATENED BY YOUR OVERWHELMING LUST FOR POWER, WHERE DID YOU THINK TO FIND ME?

AS A REBEL COMMANDER WHO SAW HER PARENTS AND SISTERS SLAIN BY BARON KARZA, DID YOU THINK I WOULD SIT BLITHELY BY WHILE YOU ASSUMED THE DESPOT'S ROLE?



BILL MANTLO * VAL MAYERIK * DANNY BULANADI * JOE ROSEN, LETTERS * TOM DEFALCO * JIM SHOOTER
 WRITER LAYOUTS FINISHED ART BOB SHAREN, COLORS EDITOR CHIEF

THE ORIGIN OF THE MICROVERSE!

DESPITE THE DESERT DEMONS' DELAYING TACTICS, FORCE COMMANDER'S WAR-FLEET IS ALREADY IN HOT PURSUIT OF THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS!

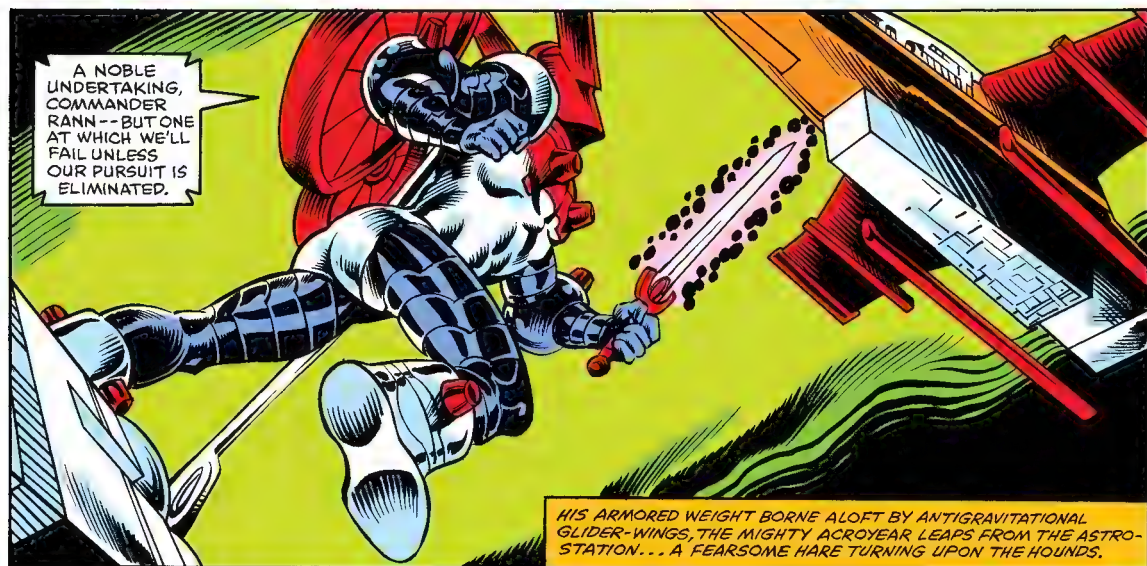
ARCTURUS, PHOTON BURSTS ARE ROCKING THE ASTRO-STATION FROM STEM TO STERN!

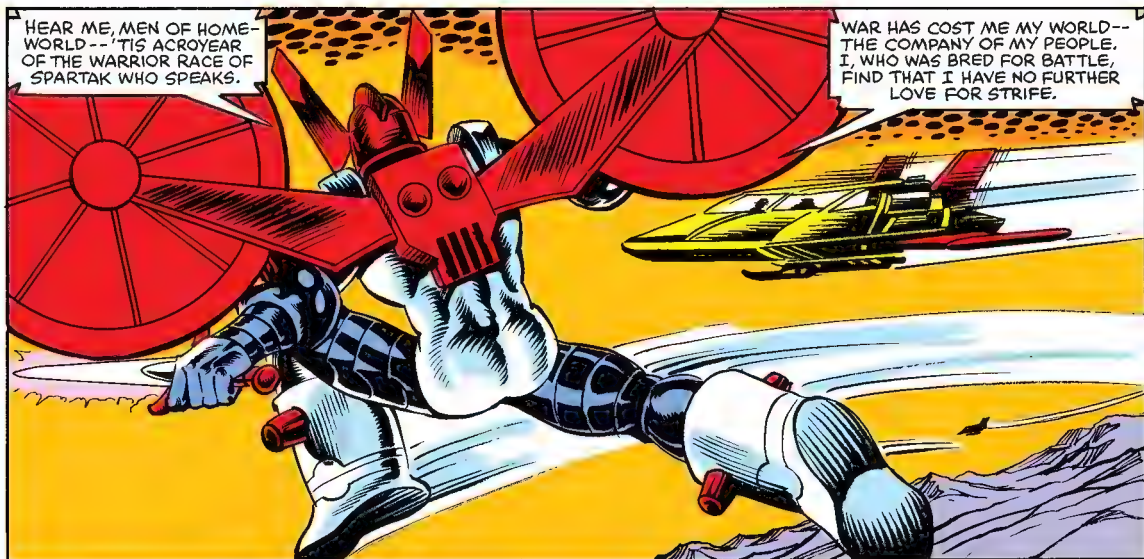
I KNOW, MARI-- BUT WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIGHT OUR PURSUERS!

OUR PRIMARY MISSION IS TO REACH THE HOMEWORLD MOLECULE CALLED... DEAD ZONE-- AND THERE USE THE THREE KEYS IN OUR POSSESSION TO UNLOCK THE SECRET OF THE MISSING ENIGMA FORCE!

A NOBLE UNDERTAKING, COMMANDER RANN-- BUT ONE AT WHICH WE'LL FAIL UNLESS OUR PURSUIT IS ELIMINATED.

HIS ARMORED WEIGHT BORNE ALOFT BY ANTIGRAVITATIONAL GLIDER-WINGS, THE MIGHTY ACROYEAR LEAPS FROM THE ASTRO-STATION... A FEARSOME HARE TURNING UPON THE HOUNDS.





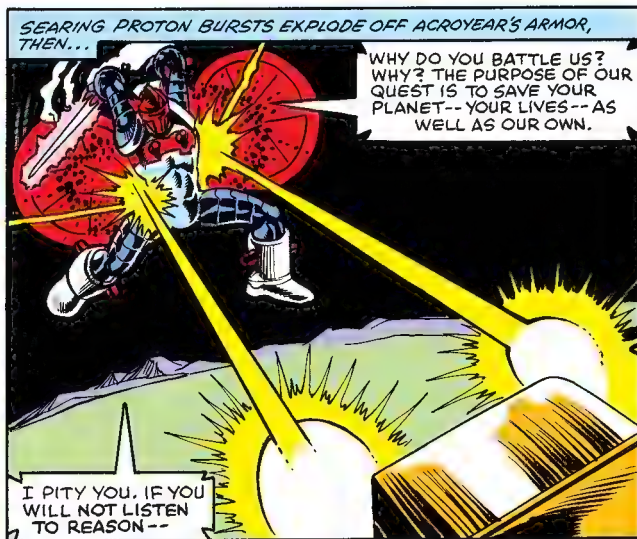
HEAR ME, MEN OF HOME-
WORLD--'TIS ACROYEAR
OF THE WARRIOR RACE OF
SPARTAK WHO SPEAKS.

WAR HAS COST ME MY WORLD--
THE COMPANY OF MY PEOPLE.
I, WHO WAS BRED FOR BATTLE,
FIND THAT I HAVE NO FURTHER
LOVE FOR STRIFE.



THE ACROYEAR'S
RIGHT IN OUR PATH!
WE'RE GOING TO
RAM HIM!

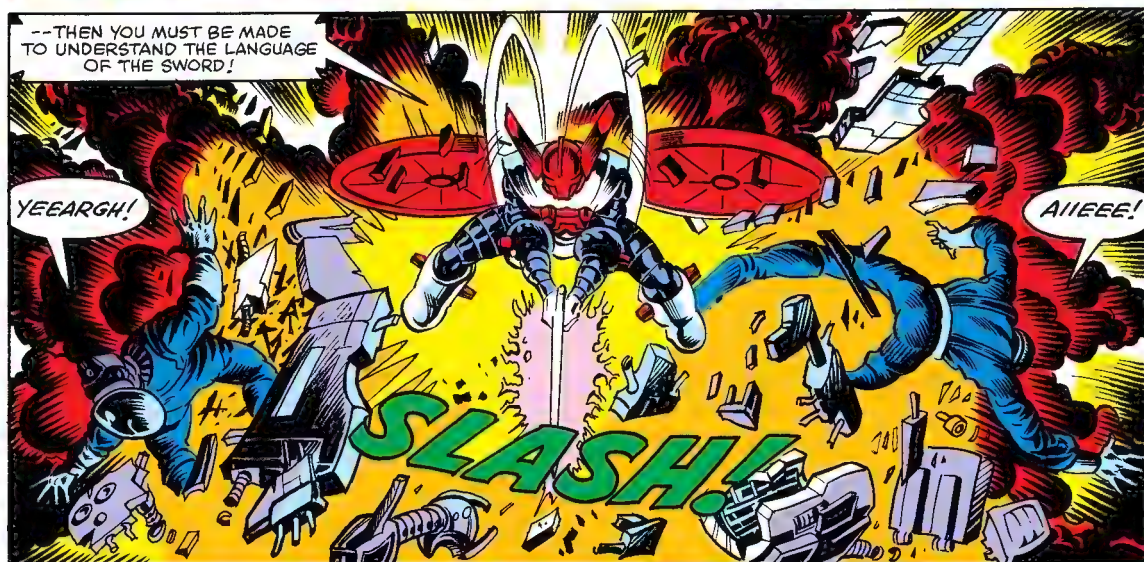
DON'T BE AN IDIOT!
FIRE THE PROTON
CANNONS!



SEARING PROTON BURSTS EXPLODE OFF ACROYEAR'S ARMOR,
THEN...

WHY DO YOU BATTLE US?
WHY? THE PURPOSE OF OUR
QUEST IS TO SAVE YOUR
PLANET-- YOUR LIVES-- AS
WELL AS OUR OWN.

I PITY YOU, IF YOU
WILL NOT LISTEN
TO REASON--

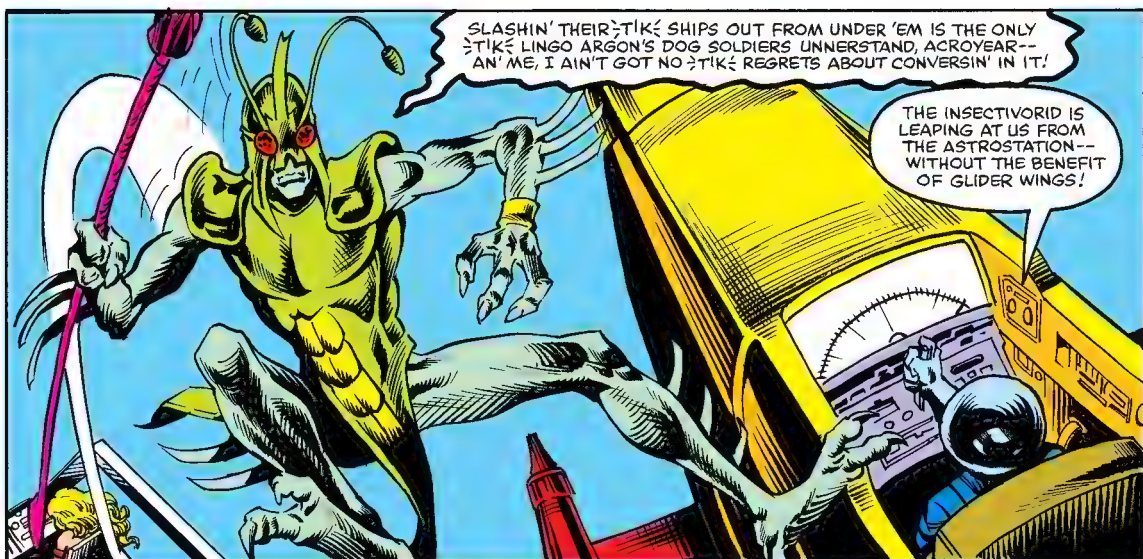


--THEN YOU MUST BE MADE
TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE
OF THE SWORD!

YEEARGH!

AIIIEEE!

SLASH!



LEMME TELL YA, FLYBOY-- I ∇ TIK ∇ HATE FLYIN'... ALMOST AS MUCH AS I HATE ∇ TIK ∇ FLEEIN' FROM PETTY TYRANTS AN' THEIR DOG SOLDIER DRONES!

THE CHANCE TA BATTLE AGAINST BLOODTHIRSTY BOZOS LIKE ∇ TIK ∇ YOU WAS THE PRIMARY REASON THIS LITTLE ∇ TIK ∇ BUG LEFT THE NEST!



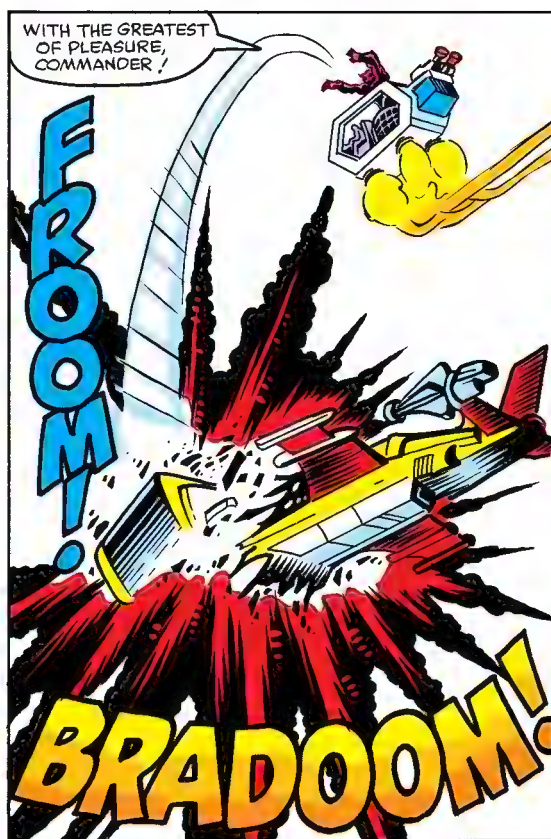
...BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, ALSO LEAVES THE ENRAGED INSECTIVORID WITHOUT A SHIP TO STAND ON.



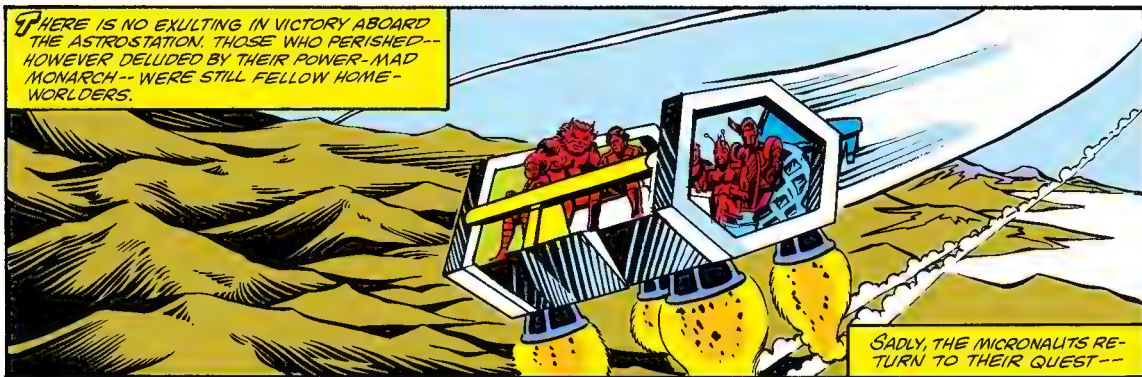
YOU WOULD FALL, LITTLE ONE, WERE ACROYEAR NOT HERE TO SAVE YOU.

THAT'S ANOTHER ONE I OWE YA ∇ TIK ∇ BIG BUDDY!





THERE IS NO EXULTING IN VICTORY ABOARD THE ASTROSTATION. THOSE WHO PERISHED-- HOWEVER DELUDED BY THEIR POWER-MAD MONARCH-- WERE STILL FELLOW HOME-WORLDEERS.



SADLY, THE MICRONAUTS RETURN TO THEIR QUEST--

-- TO DEADZONE!



... AND, BEYOND THAT, TO THEIR DESTINATION, THE END OF THEIR QUEST--THE TOMB OF PRINCE WAYFINDER, WHICH HOUSES THE SECRET OF THE ENIGMA FORCE!



THERE, A MAN FROM OUR WORLD ALREADY WAGES A DESPERATE DEFENSE AGAINST WHIRLING TERRORS FROM A TIME OUT OF MIND--

FALL, DR. STRANGE! NEVER WILL WE ALLOW YOU TO UNLOCK THE TOMB OF WAYFINDER!



AN ANCIENT OBELISK UNEARTHED IN INDIA LED ME TO THIS SUBATOMIC REALM-- IN QUEST OF ALIEN REFUGEES DRIVEN OFF EARTH BY THESE SAME WHIRLDEMONS!



AYE, STRANGE-- I'VE READ YOUR THOUGHTS-- I KNOW WHO YOU SEEK AND WHY!

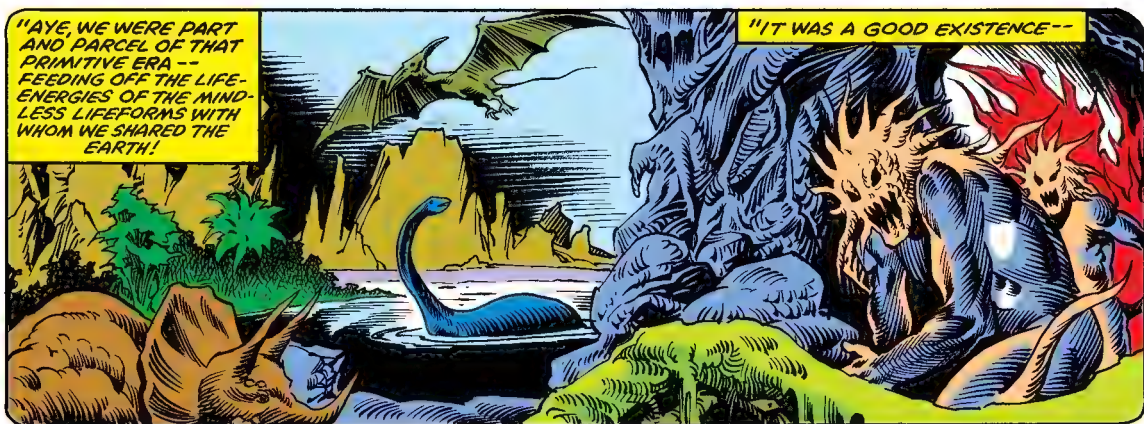
BUT WAYFINDER IS LONG DEAD! ONLY WE DEMONS REMAIN-- ETERNAL, IMMORTAL--

"-- AS DANGEROUSLY POWERFUL NOW AS WE WERE-- AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME!



"AYE, WE WERE PART AND PARCEL OF THAT PRIMITIVE ERA-- FEEDING OFF THE LIFE-ENERGIES OF THE MIND-LESS LIFEFORMS WITH WHOM WE SHARED THE EARTH!

"IT WAS A GOOD EXISTENCE--



"--UNTIL THE COMING OF THE ALIENS!

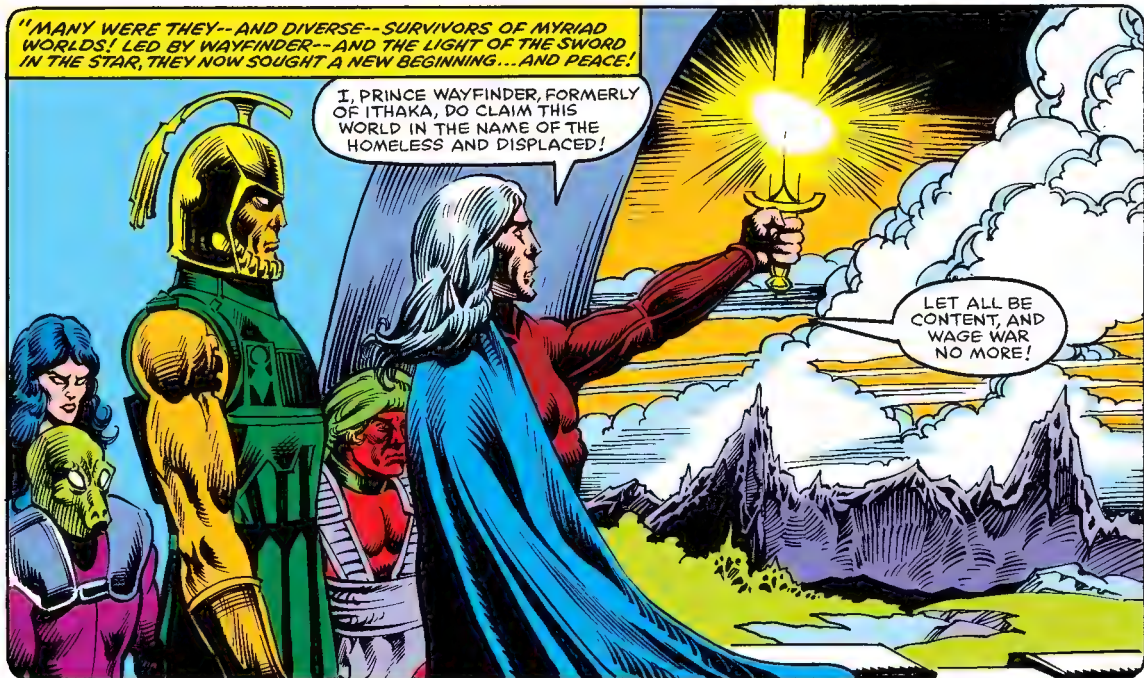
"TOUCHING THEIR MINDS, WE LEARNED THEY WERE WANDERERS WHO SOUGHT A HOME!



"MANY WERE THEY-- AND DIVERSE-- SURVIVORS OF MYRIAD WORLDS! LED BY WAYFINDER-- AND THE LIGHT OF THE SWORD IN THE STAR, THEY NOW SOUGHT A NEW BEGINNING... AND PEACE!

I, PRINCE WAYFINDER, FORMERLY OF ITHAKA, DO CLAIM THIS WORLD IN THE NAME OF THE HOMELESS AND DISPLACED!

LET ALL BE CONTENT, AND WAGE WAR NO MORE!



"IT WAS A STIRRING VOW, ONE WE WERE DETERMINED TO CARVE ON WAYFINDER'S TOMBSTONE!

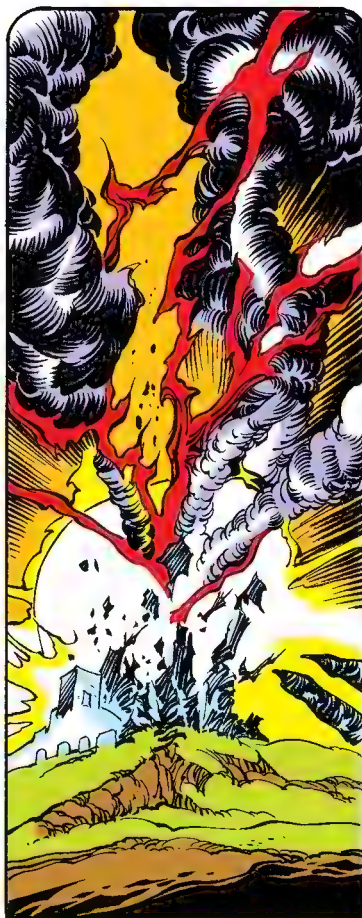
BROTHERS, THIS WORLD IS OURS!

LET US BURY HIM BENEATH ITS WALLS!

YET, WAYFINDER ERECTS A CITY UPON IT!



"SO WE ATTACKED! WAYFINDER AND HIS PEOPLE WERE STRONG-- BEARING ARMS EMPOWERED BY THE SWORD IN THE STAR!"



"BUT WE WERE MANY, AND THEY WERE FEW! THEIR CITY FELL-- AND CHILDREN CRIED FOR PARENTS LOST IN BATTLE!"

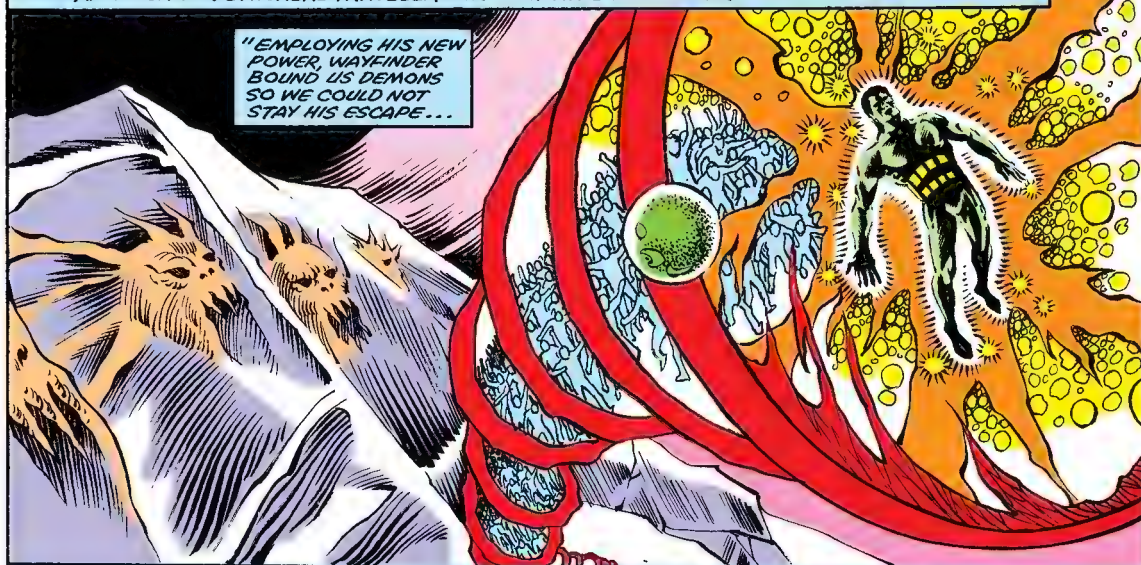
"THEN, IN THE FACE OF OUR FIERCE ASSAULT..."



ENOUGH!
I'LL NOT SEE MY SUBJECTS DIE IN DEFENSE OF THIS DEMON-RIDDEN WORLD!

SWORD-STAR, FILL ME WITH YOUR POWER, THAT I MAY LEAD THOSE WHO YET SURVIVE TO SANCTUARY!

"THUS DID THE SWORD IN THE STAR TRANSFORM WAYFINDER INTO SOMETHING OTHER THAN HUMAN-- AN EMERALD, ETHEREAL TRAVELER THROUGH TIME AND SPACE!"



"EMPLOYING HIS NEW POWER, WAYFINDER BOUND US DEMONS SO WE COULD NOT STAY HIS ESCAPE..."

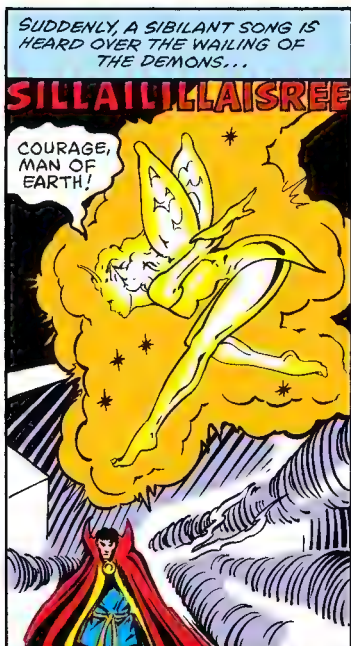
"...AND THEN, OPENING A PORTAL IN SPACE, HE CREATED A SUBATOMIC MICROVERSE TO WHICH HE LED HIS PEOPLE! THUS WAS THE MICROVERSE BROUGHT INTO BEING AND POPULATED! THUS WERE WE DEMONS DEFEATED BY THE ENIGMA FORCE, THE POWER PASSED FROM THE SWORD IN THE STAR TO THE WAYFINDER!"



BOUND IN A TIME BEYOND REMEMBRANCE BY WAYFINDER, YOUR POWER NEVER AGAIN MANIFESTED ITSELF UPON EARTH-- ELSE I OR SOME OTHER MAGE WOULD HAVE SENSED IT!

TRUE! BUT NOW THAT THE ENIGMA FORCE HAS PASSED BEYOND THE KEN OF MEN, DEMONKIND RISES UP AGAIN!

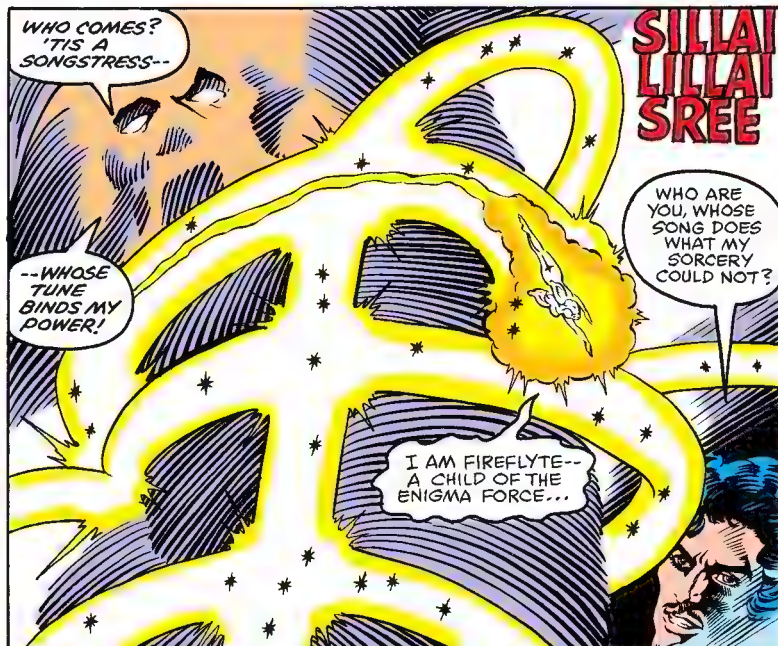
THIS TIME WE SHALL PREVAIL OVER HUMANITY-- ON EARTH AND IN THE MICROVERSE!



SUDDENLY, A SIBILANT SONG IS HEARD OVER THE WAILING OF THE DEMONS...

SILLAILILLAISREE

COURAGE, MAN OF EARTH!



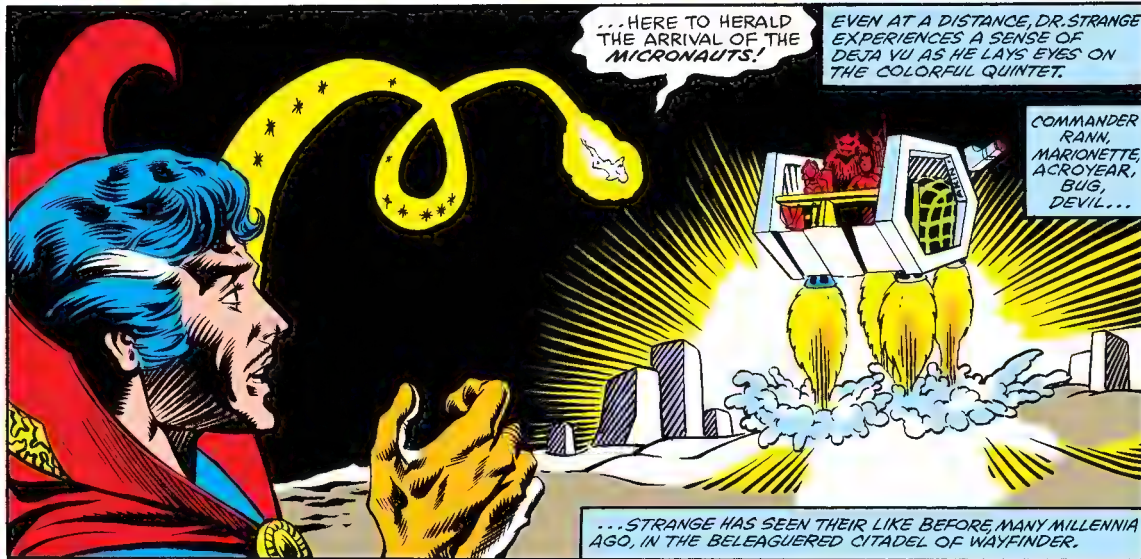
WHO COMES?
'TIS A SONGSTRESS--

--WHOSE TUNE BINDS MY POWER!

I AM FIREFLYTE--
A CHILD OF THE ENIGMA FORCE...

SILLAILILLAISREE

WHO ARE YOU, WHOSE SONG DOES WHAT MY SORCERY COULD NOT?

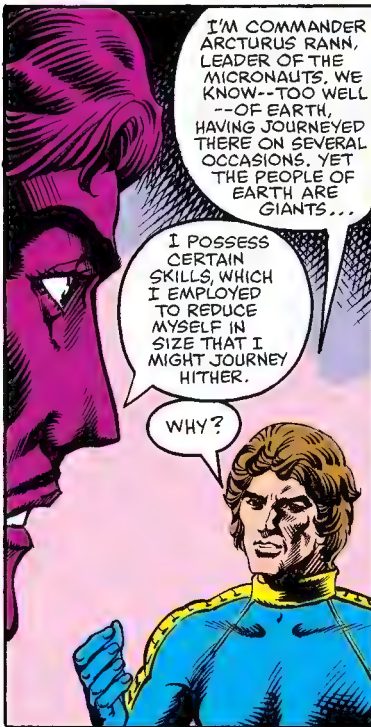
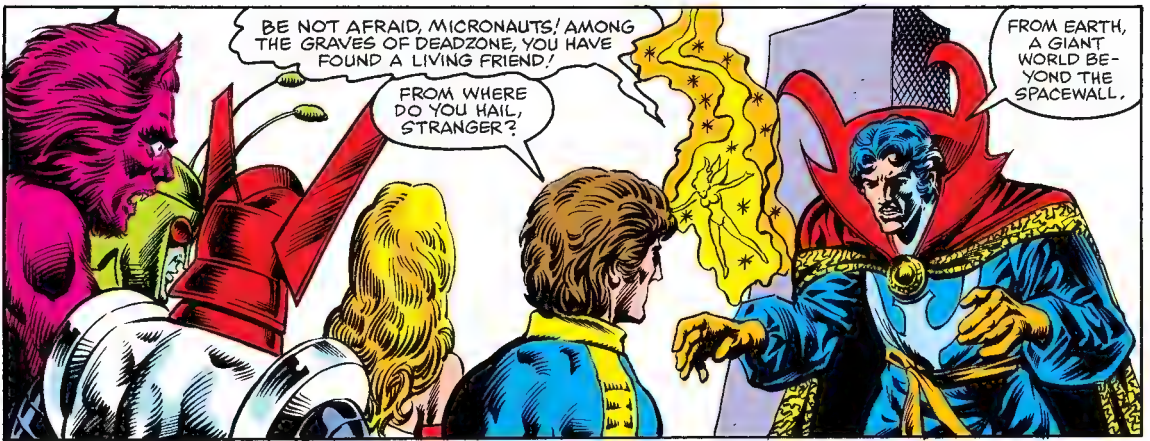


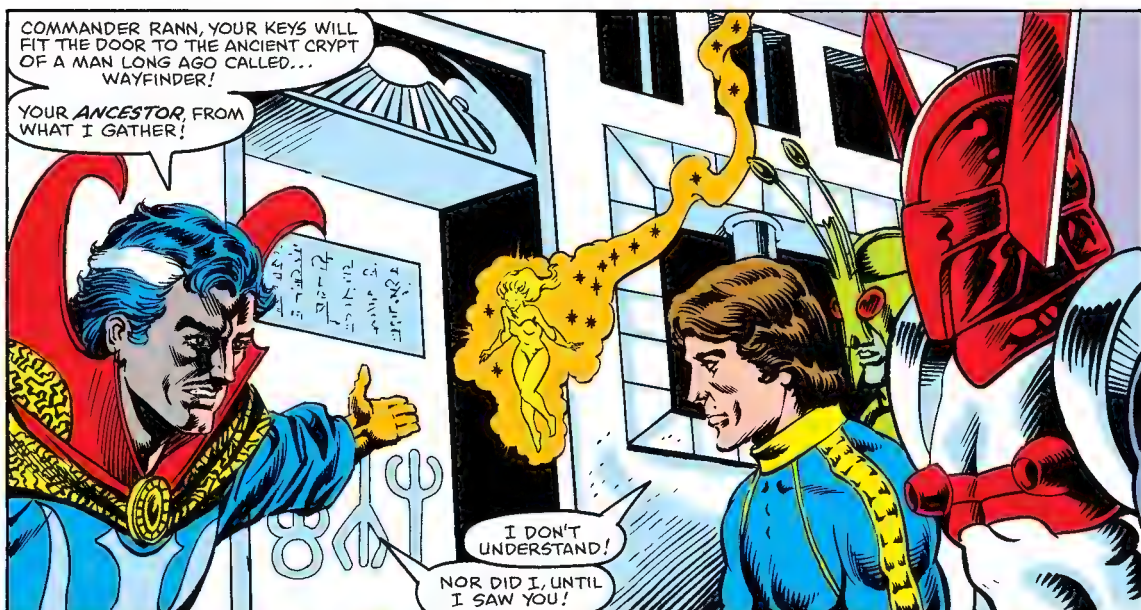
...HERE TO HERALD THE ARRIVAL OF THE MICRONAUTS!

EVEN AT A DISTANCE, DR. STRANGE EXPERIENCES A SENSE OF DEJA VU AS HE LAYS EYES ON THE COLORFUL QUINTET.

COMMANDER RANN,
MARIONETTE,
ACROYEAR,
BUG,
DEVIL...

...STRANGE HAS SEEN THEIR LIKE BEFORE MANY MILLENNIA AGO, IN THE BELEAGUERED CITADEL OF WAYFINDER.







I HAVE SUMMONED THE SHIELD OF SERAPHIM TO PROTECT US!

BUT WHO ATTACKS US AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE--AND WHY?

'TIS ONE WHO CARES LESS FOR THE FATE OF WORLDS THAN FOR HIS OWN VAINGLORY!

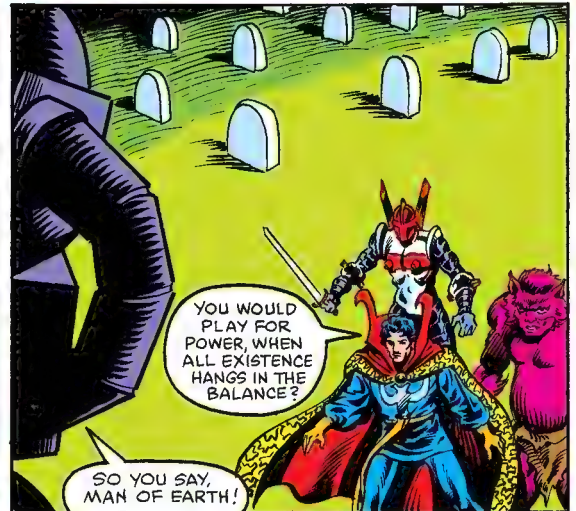
WE TOOK TOO LONG IN REACHING DEADZONE! ARGON'S FOUND US! HE'S HERE!



WELL SHOULD YOU FEAR THE WRATH OF FORCE COMMANDER, MICRONAUTS! I HAVE HEARD ALL-- SEEN ALL! THE VERY FACT THAT YOU WOULD ALLY YOURSELVES WITH THIS MAN FROM THE LARGER MACROVERSE--

-- PROVES, BEYOND ANY SHADOW OF A DOUBT, THAT YOUR LOYALTIES LIE WITH EARTH AND NOT WITH HOMEWORLD!

BUT STILL, FOR HAVING SERVED ME LOYALLY IN THE PAST, I WOULD SPARE YOUR LIVES--IF YOU TURN THE THREE KEYS TO THE ENIGMA FORCE OVER TO ME!

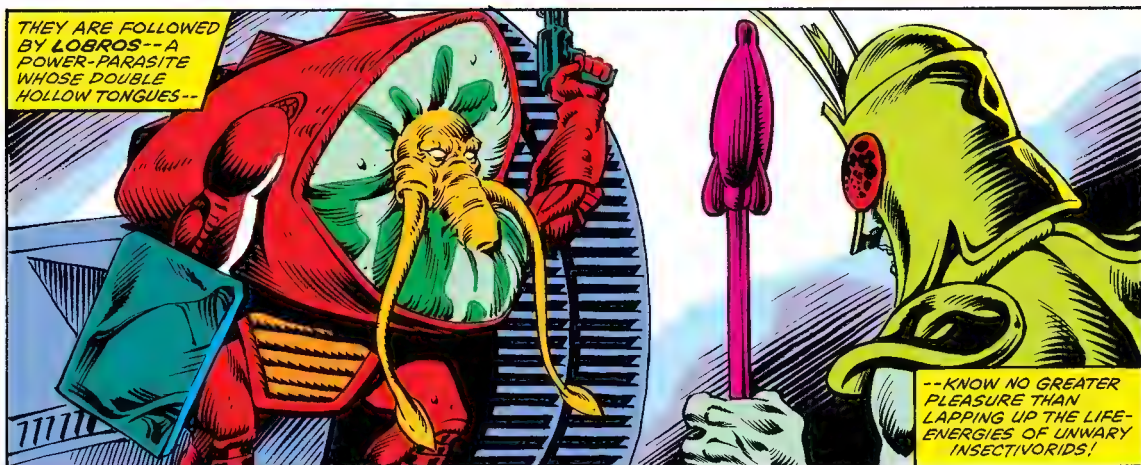
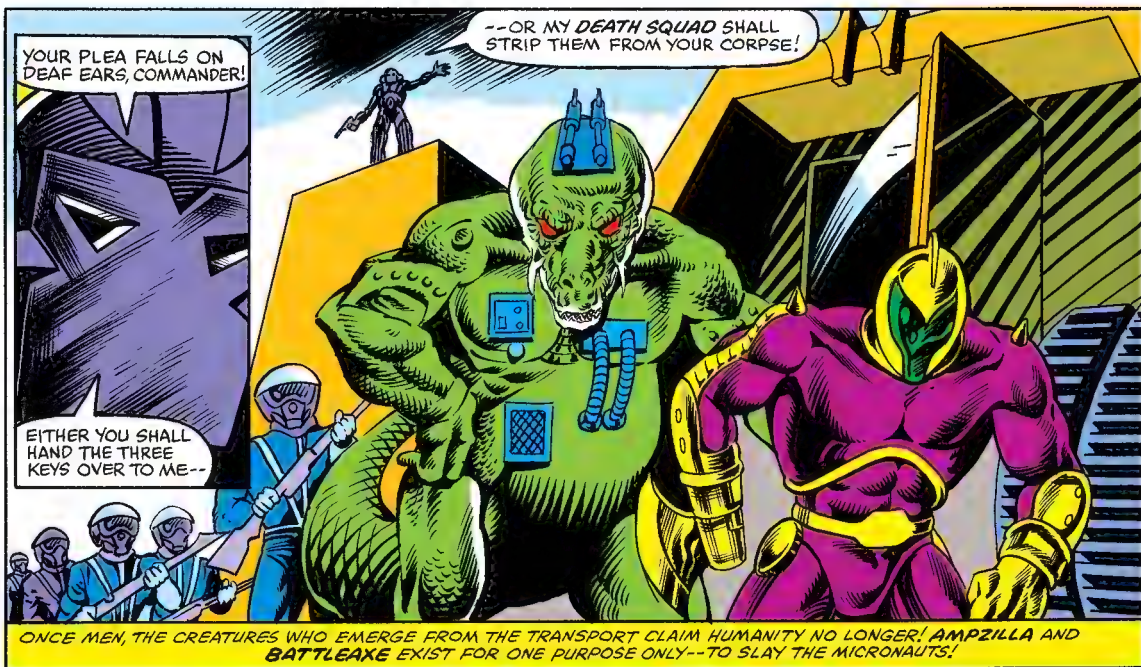


YOU WOULD PLAY FOR POWER, WHEN ALL EXISTENCE HANGS IN THE BALANCE?

SO YOU SAY, MAN OF EARTH!



NO, ARGON! IF WE DON'T USE THE THREE KEYS NOW, YOU WON'T HAVE ANY KINGDOM LEFT TO LORD!





TOGETHER, THEY COMPRISE
FORCE COMMANDER'S
KILLER ELITE... THE
DEATH SQUAD!

THE KEYS, MICRONAUTS--
OR YOUR LIVES!

WE'D PREEFFER THE
LATTER, OFF COURSSSE!



YECCCH! YA EVER
ËTIK Ë SEE A
LOBROS SUCK A
BABY INSECTVORID
OUTTA ITS ËTIK Ë
EGGSHELL,
ACROYEAR?

IT'S ONE OF THE
MORE ËTIK Ë
DISGUSTIN' SIGHTS
ON MY PLANET
KALIKLAK!

DO NOT LET FEAR
UNDERMINE YOUR
WILL TO RESIST,
LITTLE FRIEND.



WE WILL NEED
ALL OUR
COURAGE TO
COMBAT THE
DEATH SQUAD.

NOT EVEN COURAGE WILL SUFFICE!
MY DOG SOLDIER ARMIES STAND
READY TO INSURE THAT MY
ASSASSIN ELITE PREVAILS!

I KNOW NOT THE MICRONAUTS'
STRENGTH IN BATTLE, BUT THEY
STAND THEIR GROUND
BRAVELY!

STILL, MY SORCEROUS
SENSES DETECT THAT
EACH MOMENT'S DELAY
ALLOWS SUPERNATURAL
UPHEAVAL TO DRAW CLOSER
TO ERUPTION!

WHAT? A NEW
MENACE RISES
UP TO THREATEN
OUR CHANCES OF
SAVING TWO
UNIVERSES!

DEMONS!

KEEP THE HUMANS
AWAY FROM WAY-
FINDER'S TOMB.
BROTHERS! DO NOT
LET THEM USE
THEIR KEYS!

AS LONG AS THEY FIGHT
AMONG THEMSELVES THEY
WILL NEVER SUCCEED IN
REVIVING THE ENIGMA
FORCE-- THAT POWER
AGAINST WHICH NO DEMON
CAN PREVAIL!

STAND
YOUR GROUND,
DEATH SQUAD!

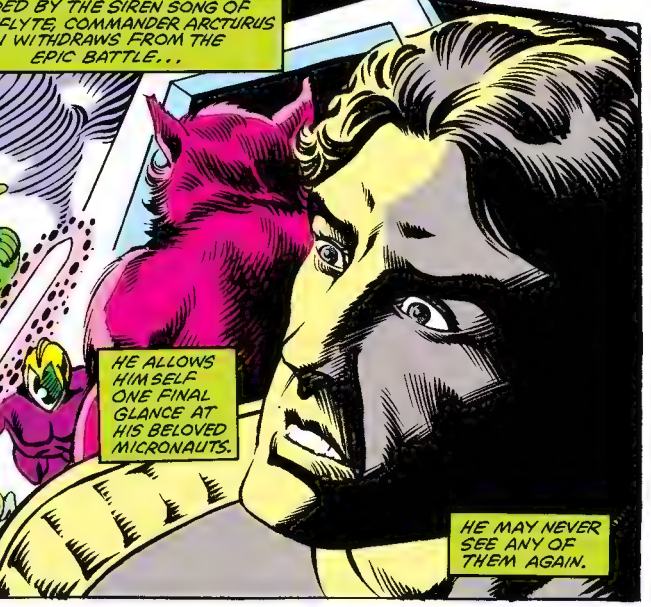
STRIKE, YOU
FOOLS! CUT THE
MICRONAUTS DOWN!
AND THE KEYS TO
THE ENIGMA FORCE
WILL BE MINE!

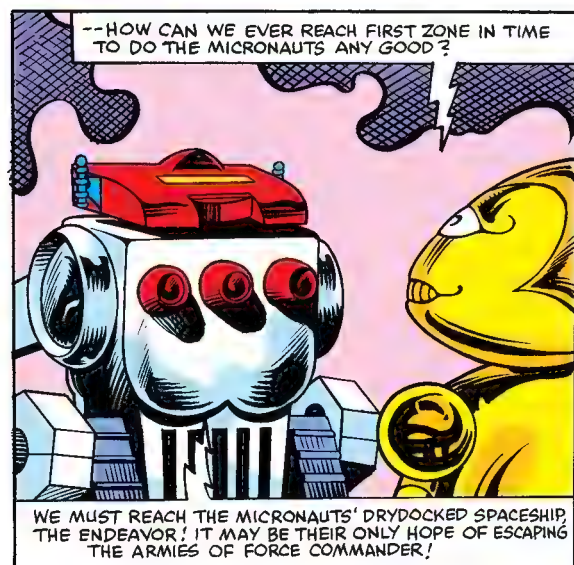
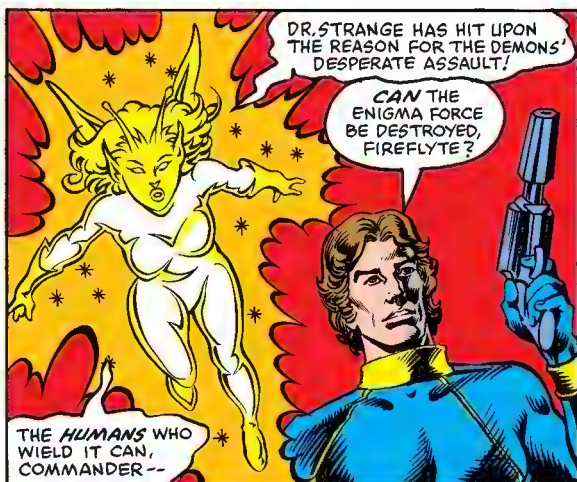
THEN WILL THESE
DEMONS WISH THEY'D
WHIRLED ELSEWHERE!

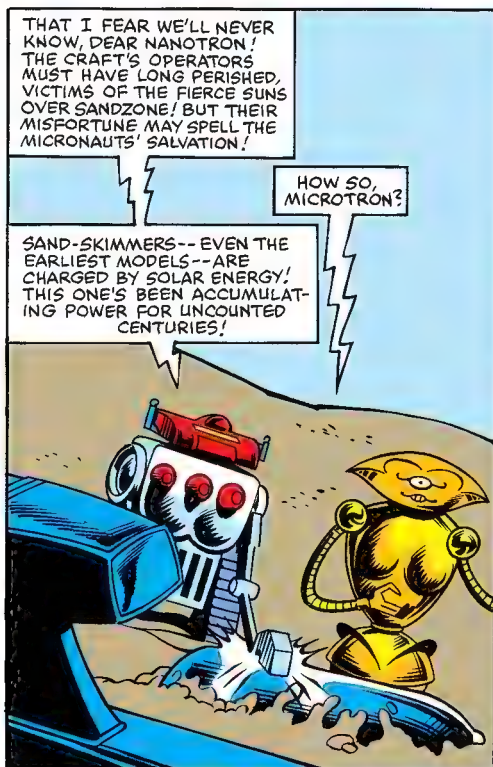
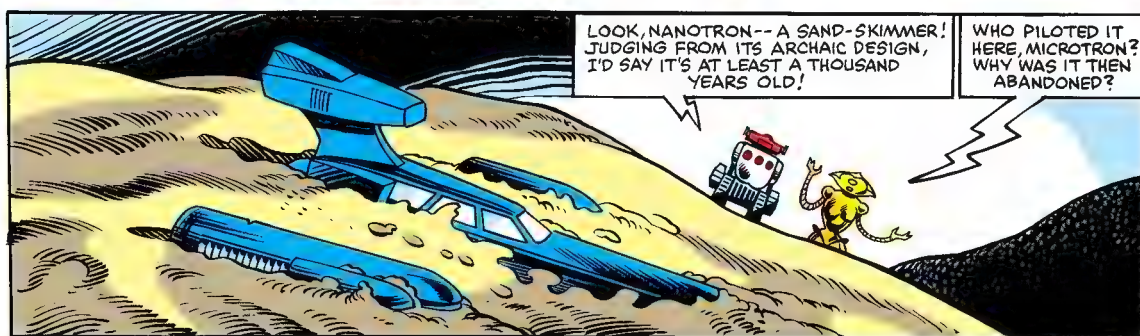
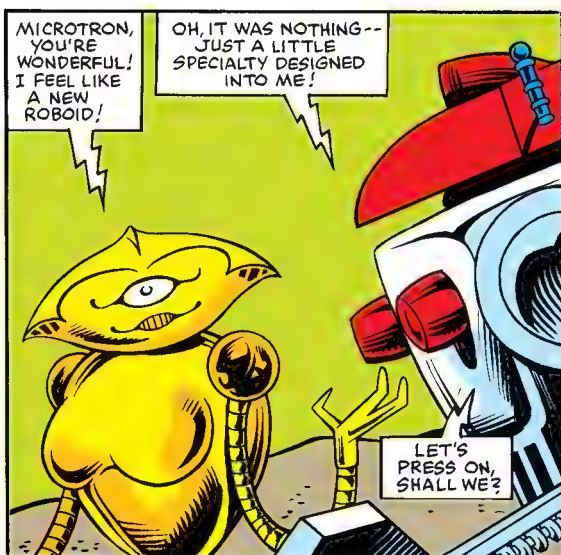
THE DEMONS ARE TEARING INTO
ARGON'S DOG SOLDIERS-- ROUTING
THEM ACROSS THE FIELD!

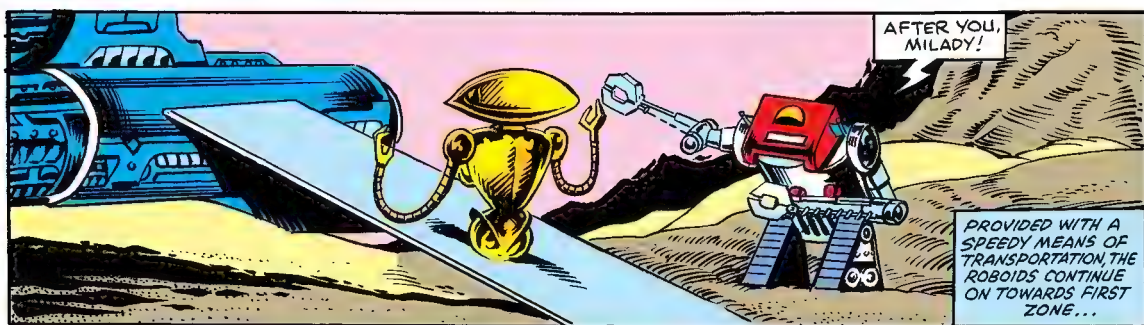
THEY DO NOT DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN
FRIEND OR FOE-- FOR THEY HATE
ALL HUMANKIND EQUALLY!

AT LEAST THEY'VE EVENED THE ODDS A BIT,
LEAVING US TO FACE THE DEATH SQUAD!



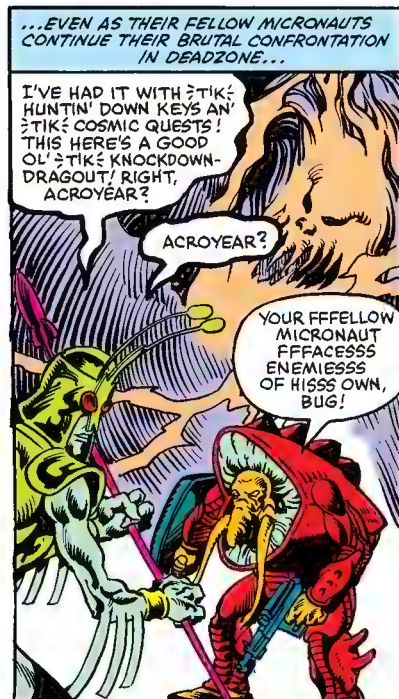






AFTER YOU,
MILADY!

PROVIDED WITH A
SPEEDY MEANS OF
TRANSPORTATION, THE
ROBOIDS CONTINUE
ON TOWARDS FIRST
ZONE...



...EVEN AS THEIR FELLOW MICRONAUTS
CONTINUE THEIR BRUTAL CONFRONTATION
IN DEADZONE...

I'VE HAD IT WITH ßTIKË
HUNTIN' DOWN KEYS AN'
ßTIKË COSMIC QUESTS!
THIS HERE'S A GOOD
OL' ßTIKË KNOCKDOWN-
DRAGOUT! RIGHT,
ACROYEAR?

ACROYEAR?

YOUR FFFELLOW
MICRONAUT
FFFACESSS
ENEMIESSS
OF HISSS OWN,
BUG!



YEAH--I SEE! BUT WE USED
TA FACE THINGS AS A ßTIKË
TEAM! NOW ACROYEAR'S
SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH ßTIKË
DEVIL!

IT WILL TAKE THE
MIGHT OF BOTH ACROYEAR
AND THE MIRTHRIAN TO
COUNTERACT AMPZILLA AND
BATTLEAXE, BUG! IN THE
MEANTIME, PROTECT
YOUR FLANK!

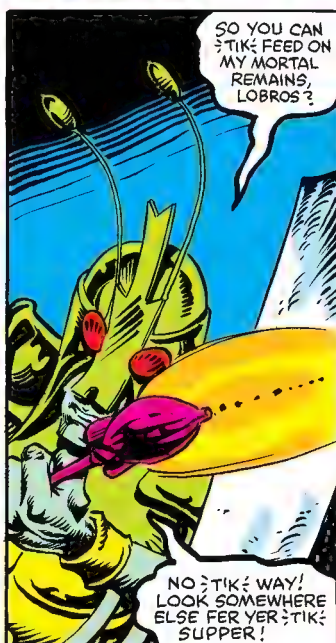


I DON'T THINK IT'S
MY ßTIKË FLANK THE
LOBROS IS AIMIN'
AT, PRINCESS--

--BUT I GET
YER ßTIKË
DRIFT!

SHAK

DIE,
INSECTIVORID!



SO YOU CAN
ßTIKË FEED ON
MY MORTAL
REMAINS,
LOBROS?

NO ßTIKË WAY!
LOOK SOMEWHERE
ELSE FER YER ßTIKË
SUPPER!



I THINK NOT, KALIKLAKIAN! YOUR
CORPSE WILL BE MY REWARD FOR
WINNING! I'M GOING TO RELISH
THIS BATTLE ALMOST AS MUCH
AS I'M GOING TO RELISH--

--LAPPING
UP YOUR
BRIGHT
GREEN
BLOOD!

ELSEWHERE ON THE GRAVE-STREWN
BATTLEFIELD...

THE DEATH SQUAD TOOK
US BY SURPRISE! THEY'RE TAKING US
ON SEPARATELY, FORCING US TO CON-
FRONT AN ENEMY A PIECE! WE CAN'T
HELP EACH OTHER THROUGH TEAMWORK!

AND THE MICRONAUTS MUST
USE TEAMWORK IF WE'RE
TO SURVIVE!



YOU FLY ABOVE
MY LASERSONIC'S
BEAM,
MARIONETTE?



BLAM!

LET US SEE
IF THIS BRINGS
YOU BACK DOWN
TO EARTH!



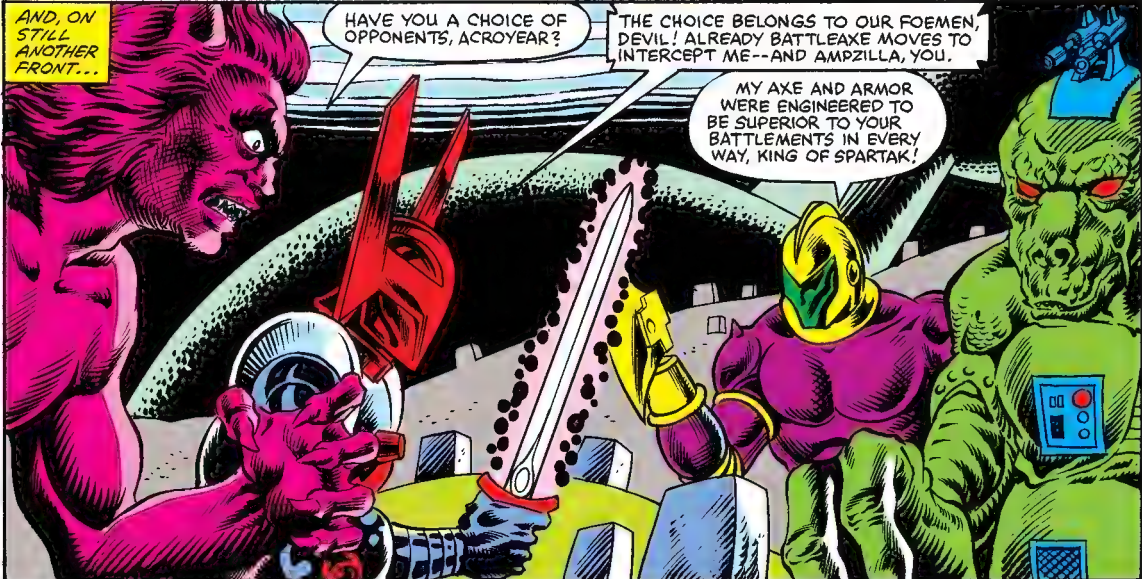
MY GLIDER-WINGS--
DESTROYED!

CAN'T
STAY
ALOFT!



I COULD FRY YOU
WHERE YOU'VE
FALLEN, SISTER
OF ARGON--

-- BUT I SUS-
PECT YOUR
BROTHER, FORCE
COMMANDER, WOULD
DERIVE MORE SATIS-
FACTION FROM YOUR
DEATH IF I WERE TO
TRAMPLE YOU BE-
NEATH MY HOOVES!



AND, ON
STILL
ANOTHER
FRONT...

HAVE YOU A CHOICE OF
OPPONENTS, ACROYEAR?

THE CHOICE BELONGS TO OUR FOEMEN,
DEVIL! ALREADY BATTLEAXE MOVES TO
INTERCEPT ME-- AND AMPZILLA, YOU.

MY AXE AND ARMOR
WERE ENGINEERED TO
BE SUPERIOR TO YOUR
BATTLEMENTS IN EVERY
WAY, KING OF SPARTAK!



THE MICROVERSIAN SYMBOL "T"-- FOR "TRAITOR"-- GLOWS CRIMSON ON ACROYEAR'S DUSKY BROW! ACCUSED OF BETRAYING HIS PEOPLE AND DOOMING THEIR WORLD, HE RECEIVED THIS JUDGMENT ERE THEY FLED INTO SPACE...

WOULD THEY COULD SEE HIM NOW, STANDING HIS GROUND UNBOWED-- WEAPONLESS-- DARING DEATH THAT THE MICROVERSE-- AND ALL ITS RACES--MIGHT LIVE.

WOULD HIS PEOPLE THINK BETTER OF HIM IF THEY KNEW?





MEANTIME BATTLES LIKE THIS ARE MOST DEFINITELY NOT THE NORM FOR THE FUN-LOVING TROPICAN CALLED DEVIL.

ON TROPICA, DEVILS ONLY FIGHT TO SEE WHO CAN BE THE HAPPIEST!

WE DO IT WITH FLOWERS!



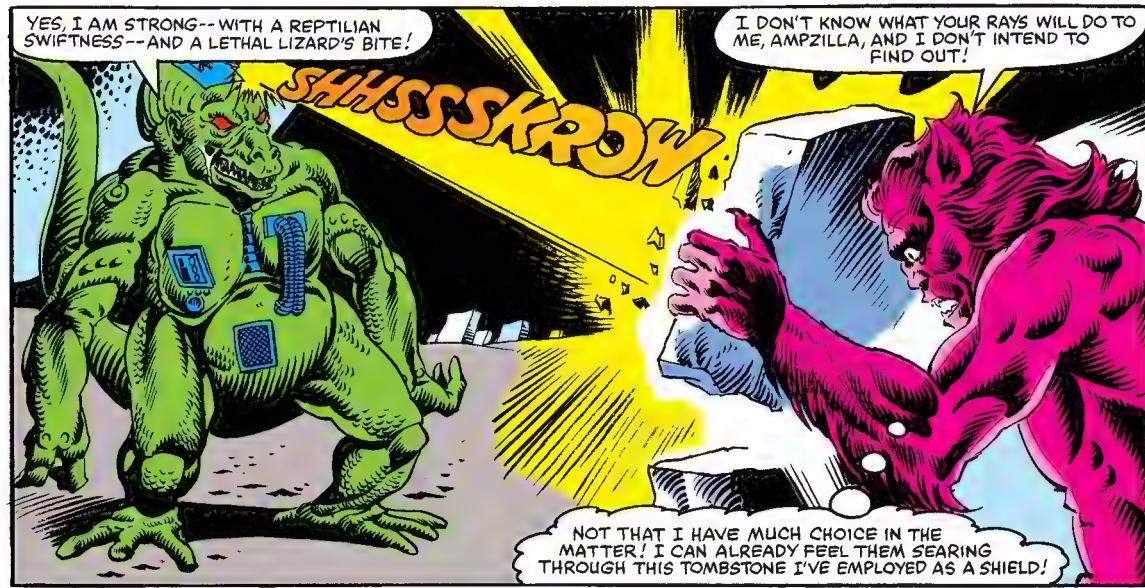
BUT THIS IS NO GAME -- THE STAKES ARE THE EXISTENCE OF THE ENTIRE MICROVERSE -- AND THE PLAYERS ARE DECIDEDLY HOSTILE!

BUT THAT'S LIFE ON THE BIG MOLECULE, I SUPPOSE! SMILE, LIZARD-LIPS, WHILE I SEND YOU TO THE DEVIL!



YOUR LEVITY MERELY MASKS YOUR DESPERATE PLIGHT, MIRTHRIAN!

WHUNFF! STRONG ONE, AREN'T YOU?



YES, I AM STRONG -- WITH A REPTILIAN SWIFTESS -- AND A LETHAL LIZARD'S BITE!

SHSSSKRON

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR RAYS WILL DO TO ME, AMPZILLA, AND I DON'T INTEND TO FIND OUT!

NOT THAT I HAVE MUCH CHOICE IN THE MATTER! I CAN ALREADY FEEL THEM SEARING THROUGH THIS TOMBSTONE I'VE EMPLOYED AS A SHIELD!



FORCE COMMANDER KNOWS FULL WELL THAT THE SWIRLING WHIRLDEMONS ARE TELEPATHS, AND HIS THOUGHTS ARE BEING "HEARD" OVER THE CLASH OF ARMS.



AT THAT MOMENT, COMMANDER RANN, LEADER OF THE MICRONAUTS, REACHES...

THE TOMB OF WAYFINDER-- MY ANCESTOR!



COMMANDER!
INSERT THE KEYS!
HURRY!



NO! YOU MUST NOT
REVIVE THE ENIGMA
FORCE! WE WILL NOT
BE BOUND AGAIN!

DEMONS!



HOLD FORTH THE THREE KEYS,
COMMANDER. HAVING BEEN
TOUCHED BY THE POWER OF THE
ENIGMA FORCE, THE METAL
REPELS THE DEMONS!



AIEEEEEE

YES!
THEY ARE
BEING
DRIVEN
BACK
BY THE
KEYS!



BE WARY, COMMANDER. THOUGH THE DEMONS
FEAR TO TOUCH YOU, THEY CAN CAUSE
HARM IN OTHER WAYS.

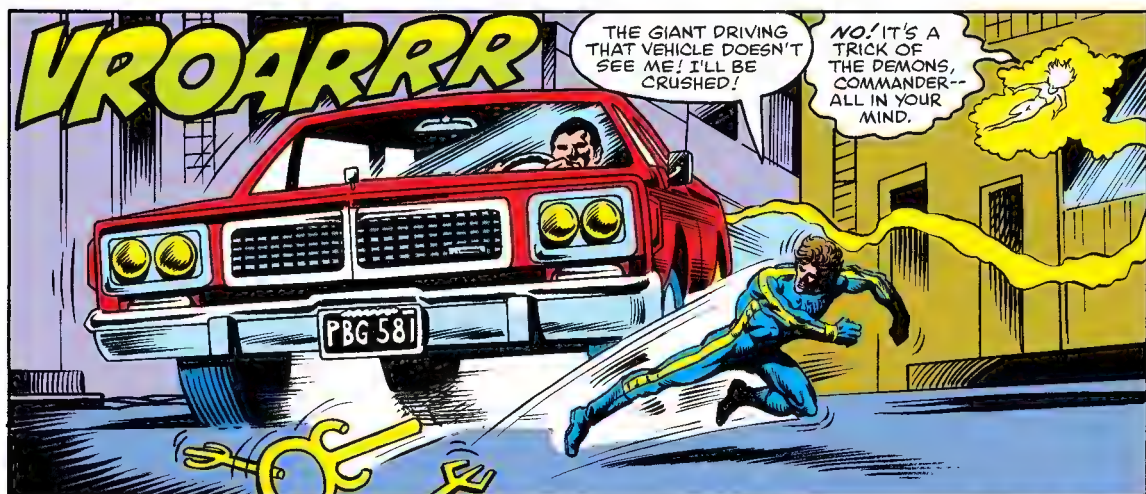
OTHER
WAYS?



DALLAN AND SEPSIS,
WHERE AM I?

WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO THE TOMB--
THE BATTLE--MY
MICRONAUTS?!?

THE DEMONS HAVE
SHIFTED TIME AND SPACE
AROUND YOU, COMMANDER.
YOU NOW SEEM TO BE STANDING
ON EARTH-- IN THE EXACT SPOT YOU
WOULD APPEAR SHOULD THE MACRO-
VERSE AND THE MICROVERSE MERGE.



THE GIANT DRIVING THAT VEHICLE DOESN'T SEE ME! I'LL BE CRUSHED!

NO! IT'S A TRICK OF THE DEMONS, COMMANDER-- ALL IN YOUR MIND.



THEY HOPE TO CAUSE YOU TO PANIC, THAT YOU MIGHT RELEASE THE KEYS.

AND SO YOU HAVE, MAN OF THE MICROVERSE!

YOU-- YOU'VE BEEN MANIPULATING ME-- VIOLATING MY MIND!



THEN, EVEN AS COMMANDER RANN LEAPS FORWARD TO REGAIN THE KEYS...

ENOUGH! STOP TAMPERING WITH MY THOUGHTS!



DO YOU HEAR ME, DEMONS?

GET OUT OF MY MIND!



WE HEAR-- AND REFUSE! SUCH MIND-TRICKS ARE OUR ONLY RECOURSE AGAINST HE WHO HOLDS THE KEYS!

AGAIN, REALITY SHIFTS AROUND COMMANDER RANN...



NOW WHERE--?
I'M FLOATING--
IN THE AIRLESS
COLD OF DEEP
SPACE--AND YET
ALIVE! OF COURSE,
ANOTHER MIND-
TRICK--!

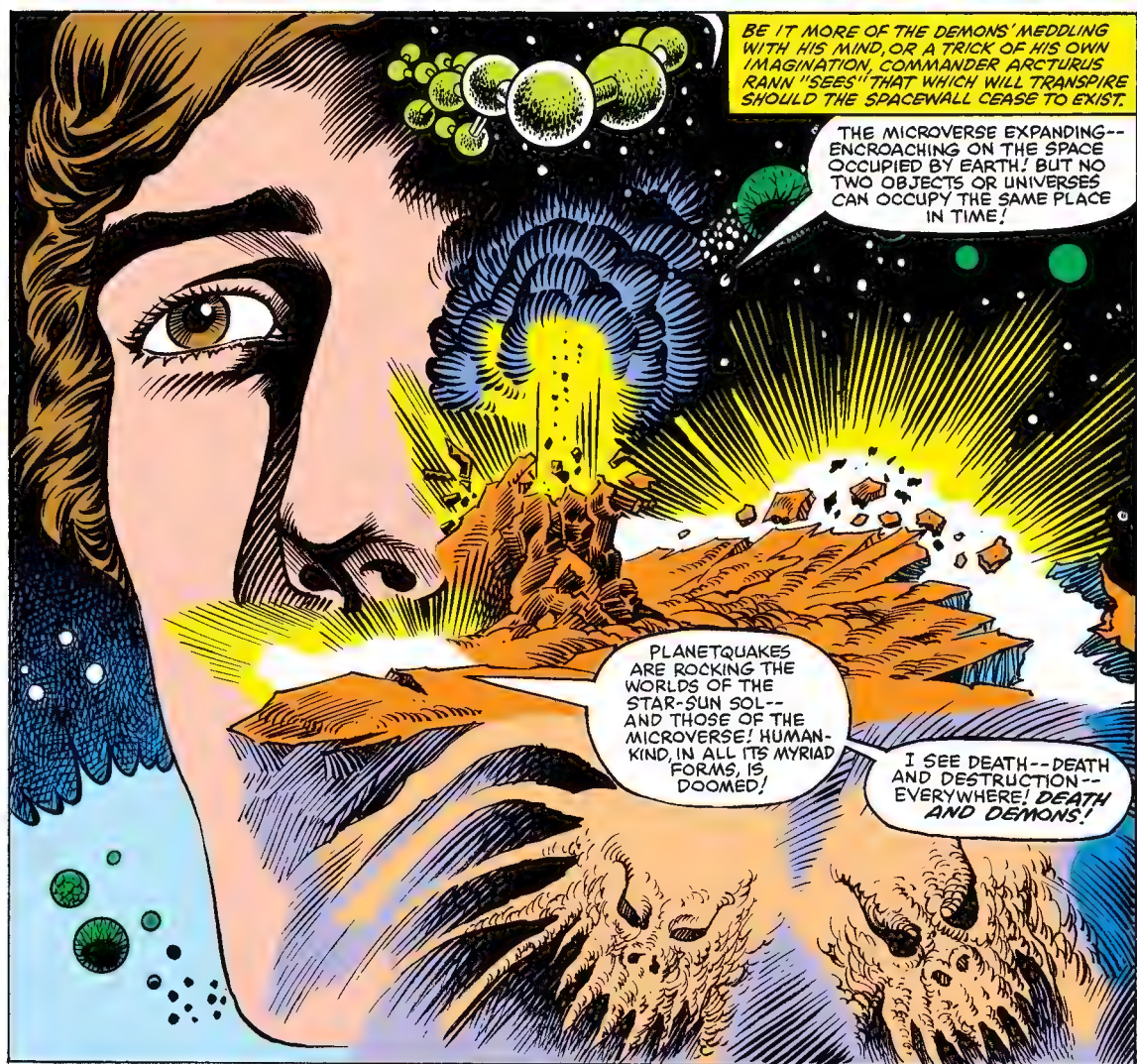
THE DEMONS
ARE SHOWING ME
THE **SPACEWALL**--
THE BARRIER THAT
SEPARATES THE
MICROVERSE FROM
EARTH AND THE
LARGER MACRO-
VERSE BEYOND...

...A SHIFTING, VIBRATORY
PARTITION THAT KEEPS
BOTH UNIVERSES FROM
VIOLENTLY COLLIDING!



BUT NOW,
BEFORE MY
EYES--

--THE
SPACE-
WALL IS
CRACKING
--SHATTER-
ING!!!

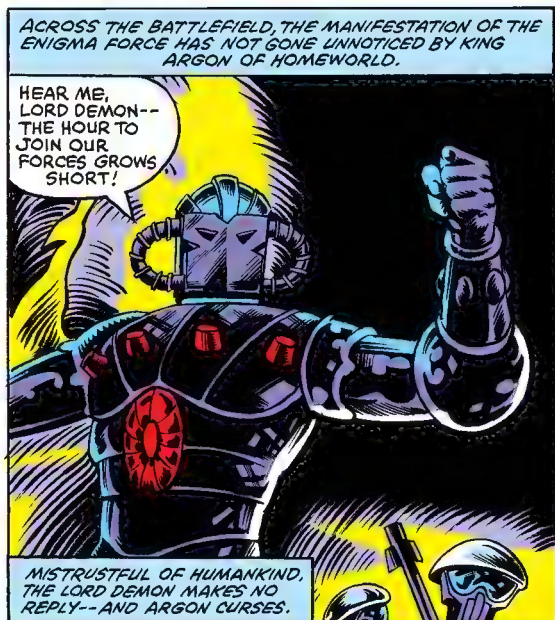


BE IT MORE OF THE DEMONS' MEDDLING
WITH HIS MIND, OR A TRICK OF HIS OWN
IMAGINATION, COMMANDER ARCTURUS
RANN "SEES" THAT WHICH WILL TRANSPIRE
SHOULD THE SPACEWALL CEASE TO EXIST.

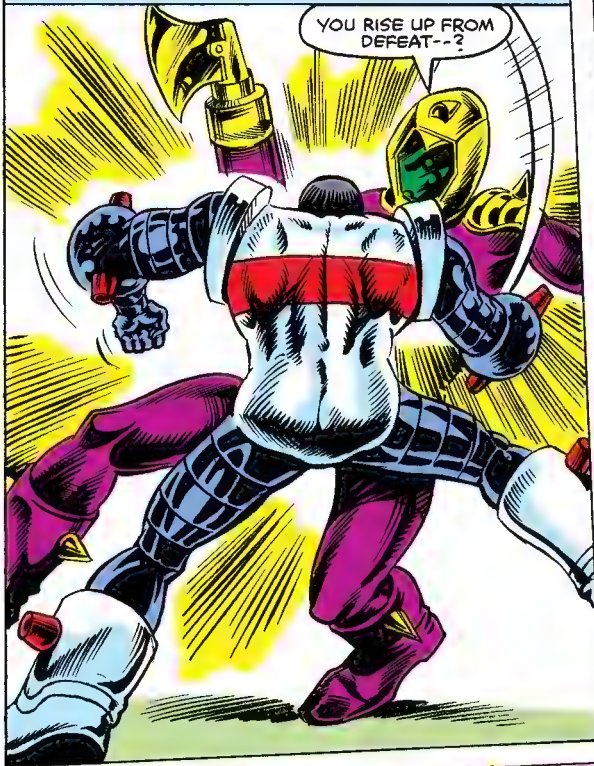
THE MICROVERSE EXPANDING--
ENCROACHING ON THE SPACE
OCCUPIED BY EARTH! BUT NO
TWO OBJECTS OR UNIVERSES
CAN OCCUPY THE SAME PLACE
IN TIME!

PLANETQUAKES
ARE ROCKING THE
WORLDS OF THE
STAR-SUN SOL--
AND THOSE OF THE
MICROVERSE! HUMAN-
KIND, IN ALL ITS MYRIAD
FORMS, IS
DOOMED!

I SEE DEATH--DEATH
AND DESTRUCTION--
EVERYWHERE! **DEATH
AND DEMONS!**



AMIDST THE TOMBSTONES BELOW, ACROYEAR OF SPARTAK
LEAPS BENEATH HIS OPPONENT'S DESCENDING ARM-AXE--
AND ARMOR CLASHES AGAINST ARMOR.

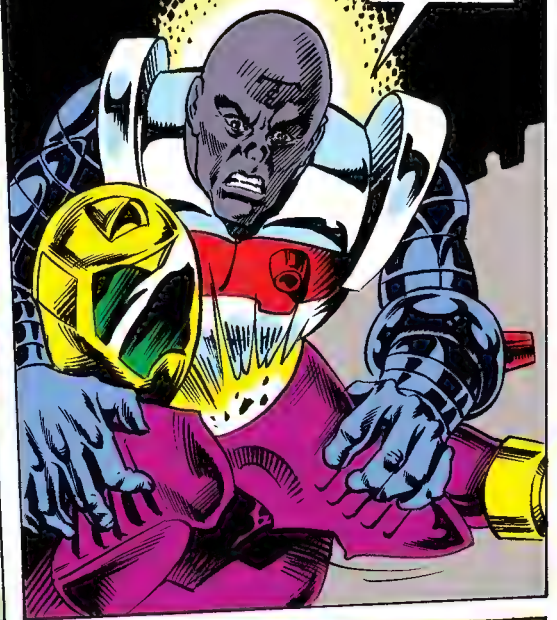


YOU RISE UP FROM
DEFEAT--?

YOUR LIEGE
LORD, KING ARGON,
IS GUILTY OF A
GRAVE MISCALCU-
LATION, BATTLEAXE.

THOUGH HE HAS
GENETICALLY CREATED
A FOE CAPABLE OF
DISARMING ME--

-- HE HAS NOT
CREATED ONE
CAPABLE OF
DEFEATING
ME.



I RISE,
BATTLEAXE,
UNARMED-- BUT
VICTORIOUS!

THIS DAY ON THE DEADZONE MOLECULE
OF HOMEWORLD, HE HAS ADDED ANOTHER
STANZA TO THE SAGA OF ACROYEAR
STRENGTH.

NO! YOU ARE
HURLING ME
TOWARDS--!



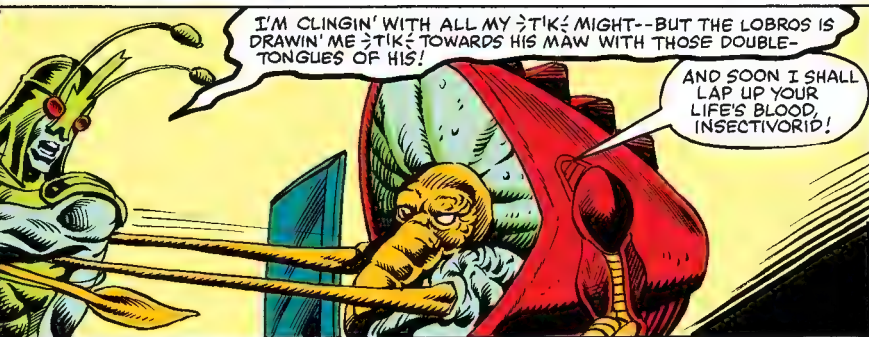
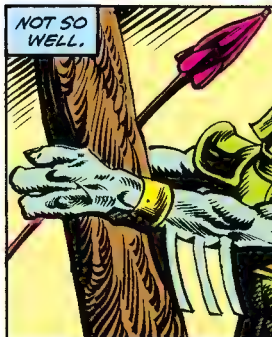
AMPZILLA!

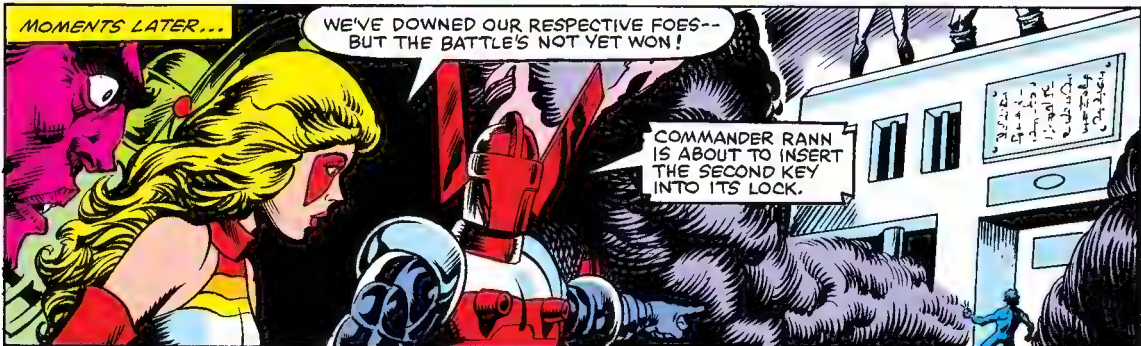
ON HIS WARRIOR-WORLD OF SPARTAK, THE PROWESS OF KING
ACROYEAR WAS LEGEND.

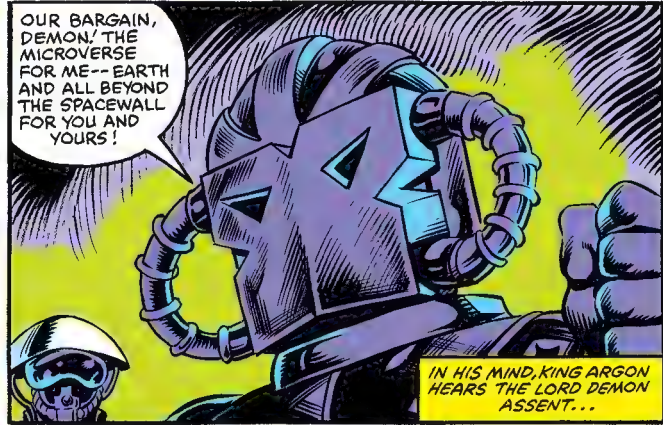
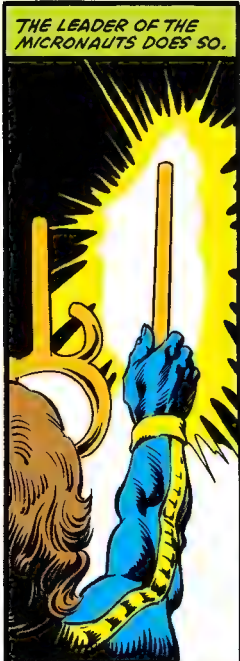
KASPAK!

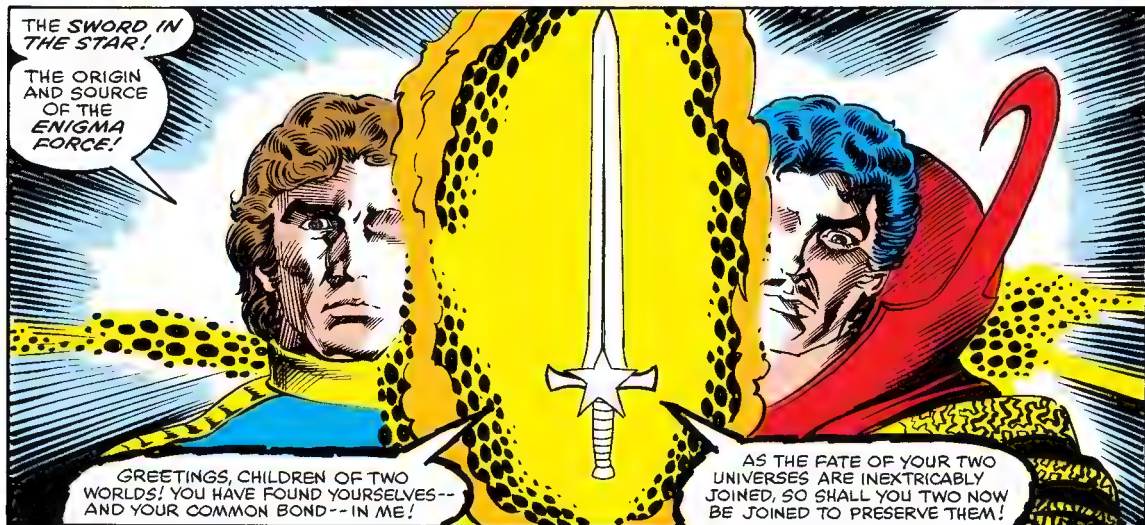
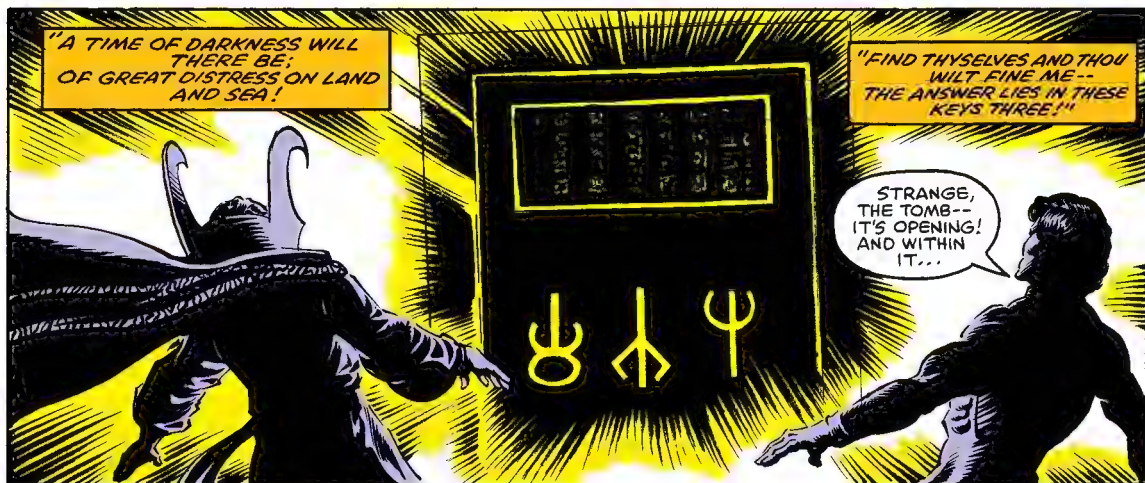


WHOM!









TOUCHING COMMANDER RANN AND DR. STRANGE WITH ITS POWER, THE SWORD IN THE STAR TRANSFORMS TWO MEN INTO ONE BEING BURSTING WITH INCREDIBLE POWER.

THE UNIPOWER
--ACTIVE
ENERGY AGENT
OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE!

WE'RE...DIFFERENT!
WE'VE...CHANGED!

TWO ARE
NOW ONE,
AND BOTH ARE
--CAPTAIN
UNIVERSE!

THEY SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE--THEY THINK WITH ONE MIND-- AND THEY SHARE THE SAME PURPOSE.

WE EXIST TO SAFEGUARD
THE SPACEWALL--TO PRE-
SERVE THE BALANCE BE-
TWEEN THE MICROVERSE
AND THE MACROVERSE!

OTHERS HAVE BEEN
CALLED BEFORE US TO
WIELD THE POWER OF
CAPTAIN UNIVERSE, BUT
NEVER HAS THE DANGER
BEEN SO GREAT!

WITH THE SPEED OF
THOUGHT, CAPTAIN
UNIVERSE REACHES
THE SPACEWALL.

THERE, DRAWING ON RANN'S KNOWLEDGE
OF THE ENIGMA FORCE--

--ON THE
MYSTIC
MIGHT OF
DR. STEPHEN
STRANGE--

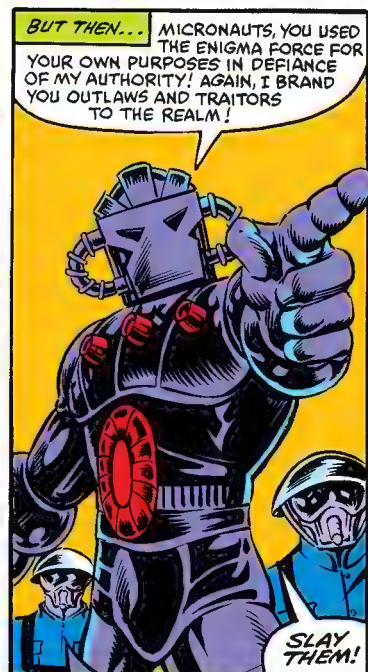
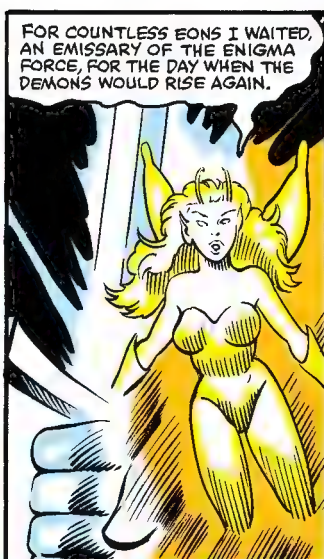
--AND ON THE UNIPOWER COMMON TO
BOTH, THE JOINED HEROES UNIFY THE
SPACEWALL--STRENGTHENING IT SO
THAT THEIR UNIVERSES WILL NEVER AGAIN
BE IN PERIL OF VIOLENT COLLISION!

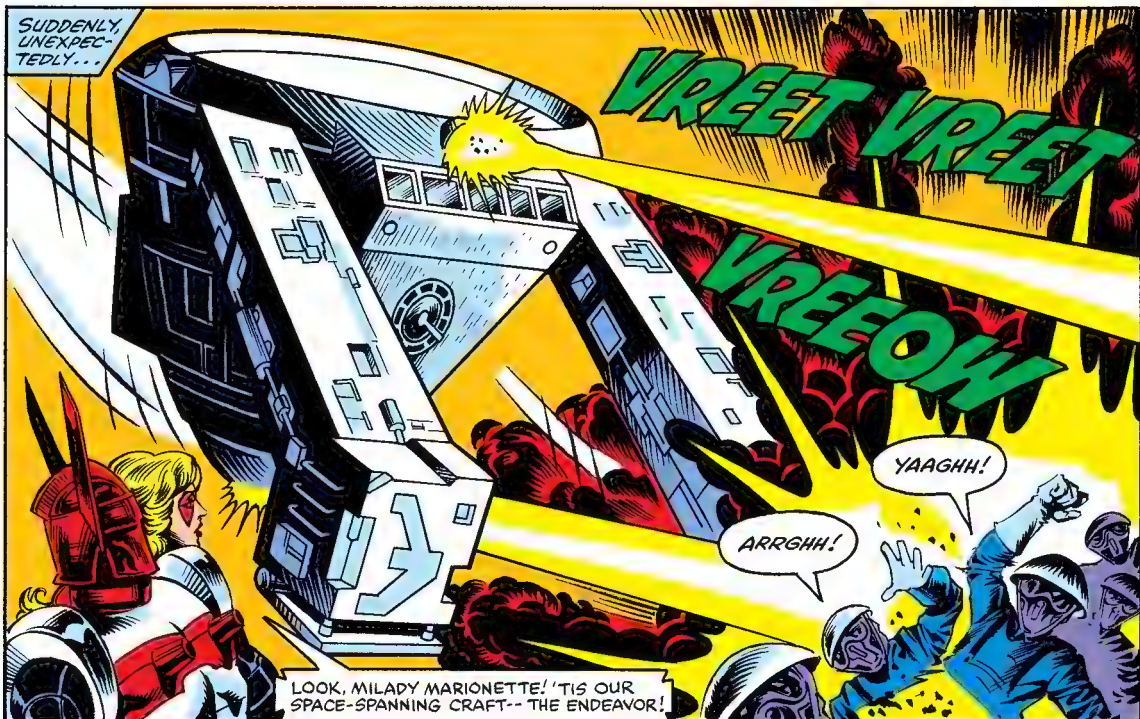
THEIR DUTY DONE, COMMANDER RANN
AND DR. STRANGE REGAIN THEIR INDIV-
IDUALITY AS THE UNIPOWER RETURNS
TO THE ENIGMA FORCE--UNTIL SUCH
TIME AS IT IS AGAIN NEEDED.

THE ENIGMA
FORCE HAS
TRUMPHEDED,
STRANGE! THE
MICROVERSE
IS SAVED!

AS IS MY REALITY,
COMMANDER RANN!
IT HAS BEEN AN
HONOR SHARING
EXISTENCE WITH
YOU!

BUT NOW-- FROM
MY SIDE OF THE
SPACEWALL--I MUST
BID YOU...FAREWELL!





SUDDENLY,
UNEXPEC-
TEDLY...

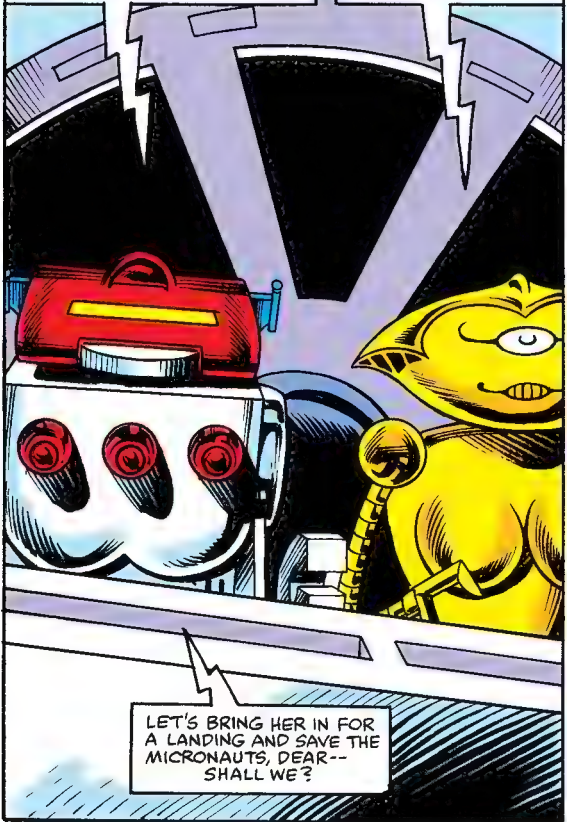
VREET VREET
VREEOW

LOOK, MILADY MARIONETTE! 'TIS OUR
SPACE-SPANNING CRAFT-- THE ENDEAVOR!

AND, GUIDING THE ENDEAVOR TO THE MICRONAUTS'
RESCUE...

NANOTRON, IT LOOKS LIKE WE
RETRIEVED THE ENDEAVOR--
AND MADE IT BACK HERE--
IN THE NICK OF TIME!

YOU WERE SO BRAVE
AND RESOURCEFUL,
MICROTRON-- AND
SO CLEVER!



LET'S BRING HER IN FOR
A LANDING AND SAVE THE
MICRONAUTS, DEAR--
SHALL WE?

A BELLY-RAMP DESCENDS AS THE ENDEAVOR'S FORCE-
SHIELDS ARE EXTENDED TO COVER THE ESCAPING
MICRONAUTS.



I HATE Σ TIK ϵ
RUNNIN' AWAY
FROM A
FIGHT-- NO
MATTER HOW
 Σ TIK ϵ HOPE-
LESS!

THERE IS A TIME
FOR VALOR, BUG,
AND A TIME FOR
STRATEGY.

IN OTHER
WORDS: HE
WHO LIVES TO
RUN AWAY,
LIVES TO RUN
ANOTHER
DAY!

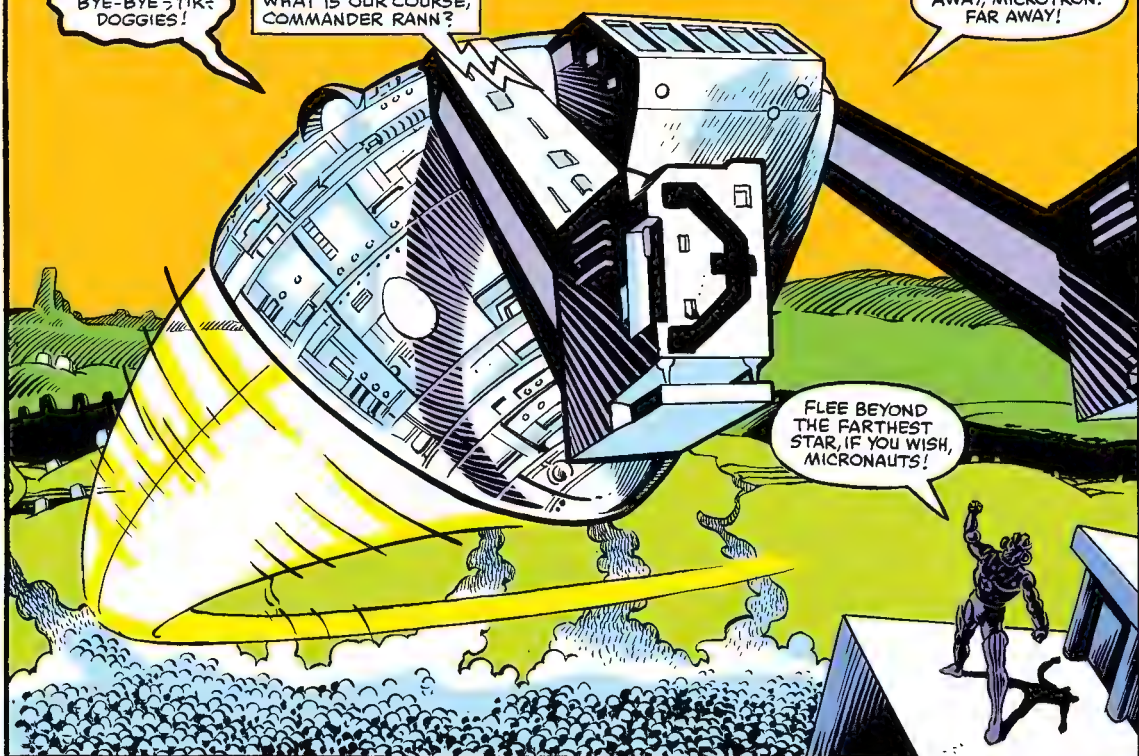
THEN, WITH THE GRAVITATIONAL THRUST OF THEIR WARP-DRIVE ENGINES CRUSHING THE SURROUNDING DOG SOLDIER SQUADRONS TO THE GROUND OF DEADZONE, THE MARVELOUS MICRONAUTS GUIDE THEIR SHINING SHIP INTO THE SKY!

BYE-BYE TIK-
DOGGIES!

WHAT IS OUR COURSE,
COMMANDER RANN?

AWAY, MICROTRON!
FAR AWAY!

FLEE BEYOND
THE FARTHEST
STAR, IF YOU WISH,
MICRONAUTS!



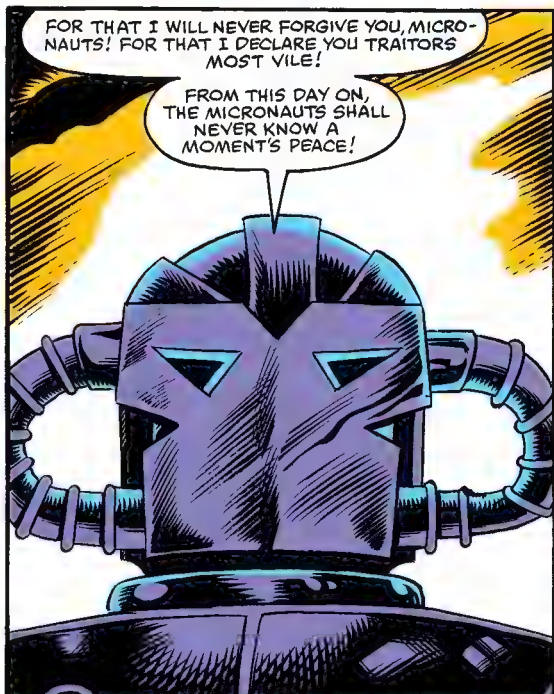
THIS DAY YOU HAVE
STOLEN FROM ME
THE POWER THAT
WOULD HAVE MADE
ME OVERLORD OF
ALL EXISTENCE!

THE SWORD IN
THE STAR GLOWS
NO LONGER! THE
ENIGMA FORCE
HAS BEEN SNATCHED
FROM MY GRASP--
IT AGAIN RESIDES
IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS
MIND OF COMMANDER
RANN!



FOR THAT I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU, MICRO-
NAUTS! FOR THAT I DECLARE YOU TRAITORS
MOST VILE!

FROM THIS DAY ON,
THE MICRONAUTS SHALL
NEVER KNOW A
MOMENT'S PEACE!



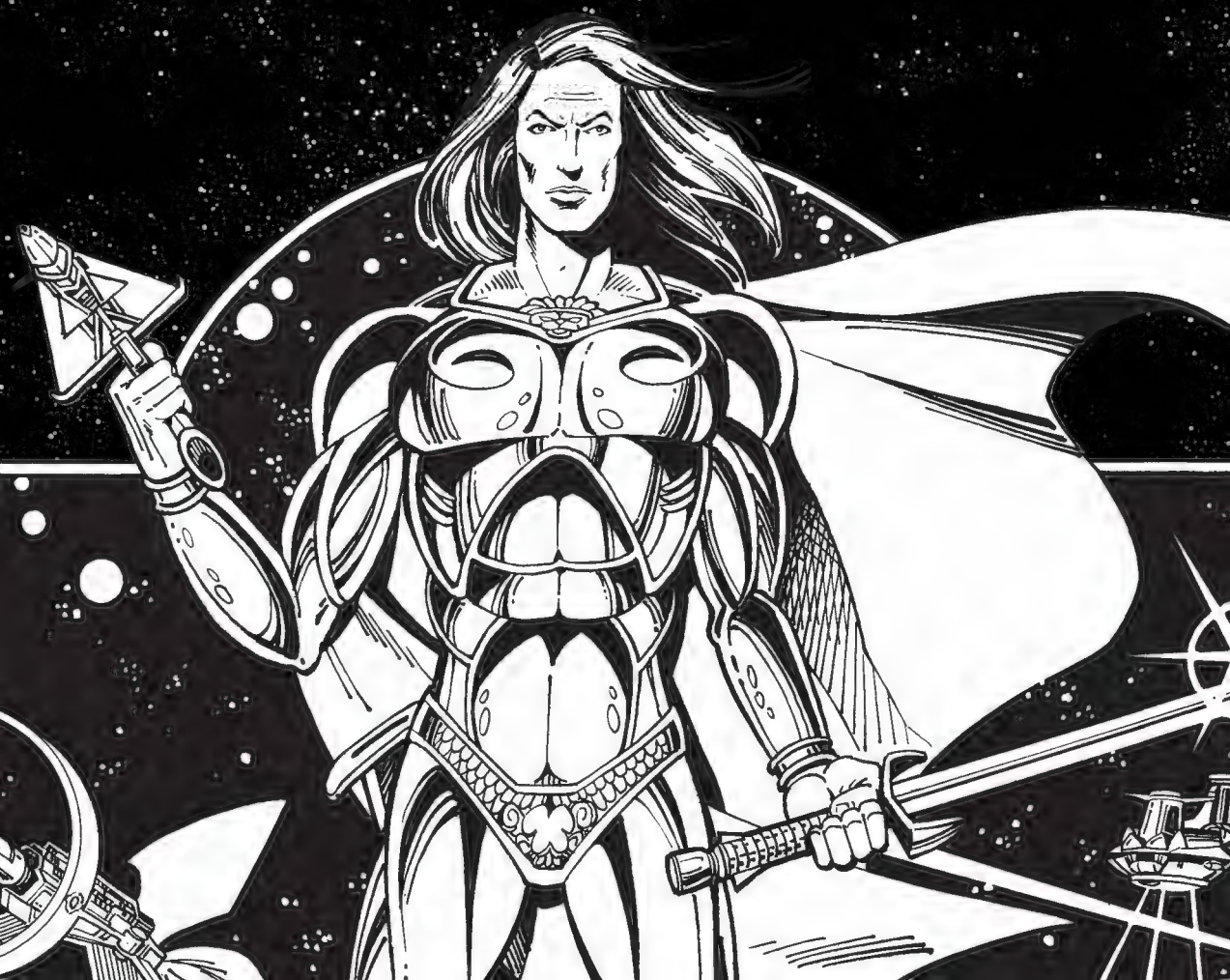
THE MICRONAUTS DO NOT HEAR FORCE COMMANDER'S
CURSE... BUT THEY SHALL KNOW HIS WRATH IN THE
GRIM DAYS THAT FOLLOW!

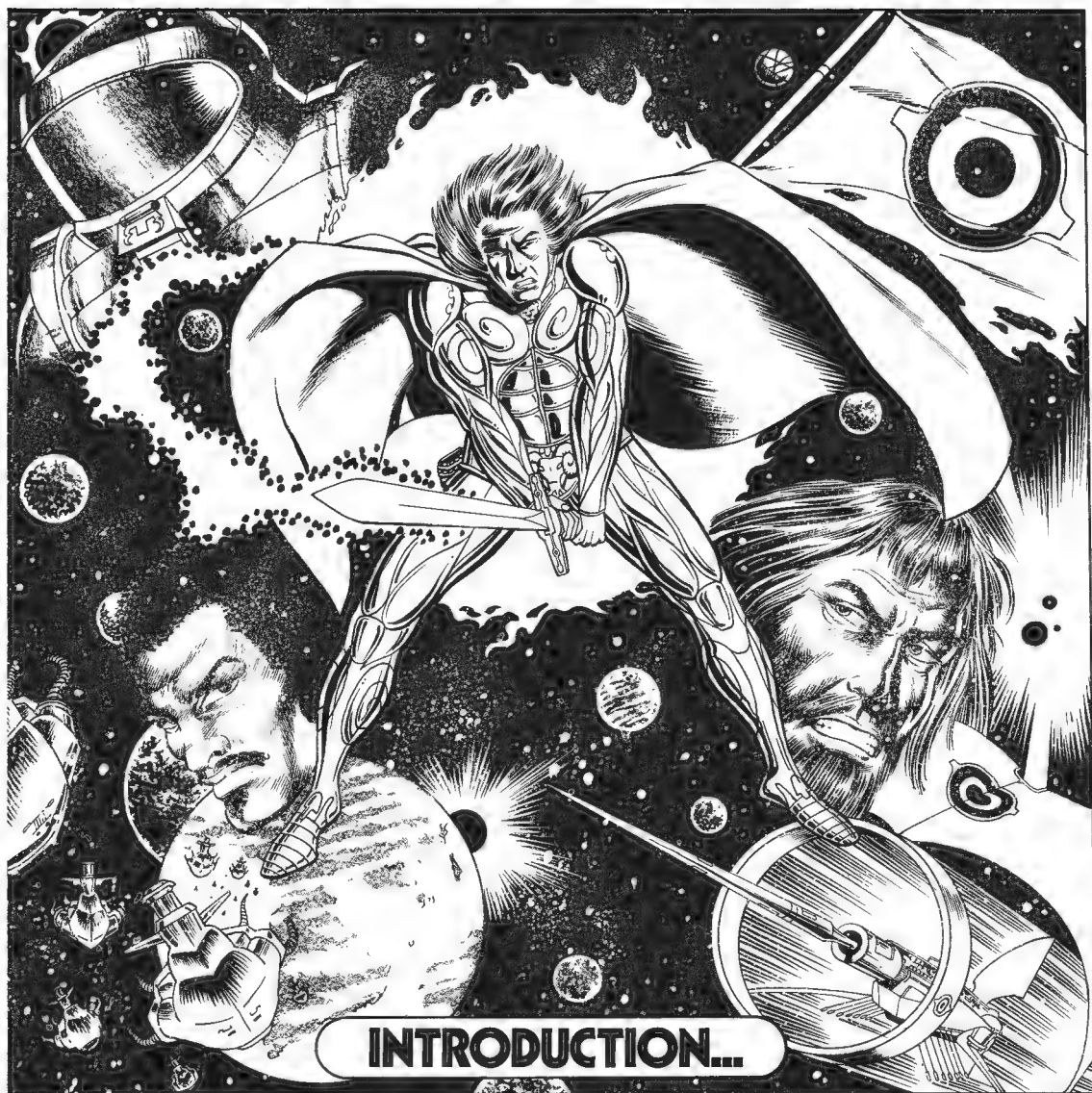
NEXT: **EARTHFALL!**

THE SWORD IN THE STAR

In 1975, before he transformed the Micronauts action figures into a cosmic comic-book mythos, Bill Mantlo merged ancient epics and science fiction in "The Sword in the Star." The feature appeared in Marvel's black-and-white magazine-format title *Marvel Preview*, lasting just two installments.

These rare stories reveal Mantlo's early explorations into many of the concepts that would later be core elements of the Micronauts—a space-faring hero with a signature ship and robot companion. Years later, when Mantlo revealed the origin of the Micronauts, Prince Wayfinder and the Sword in the Star mythology became foundational components of the Microverse.





ART: KEITH GIFFEN & BOB McLEOD

Sword In The Star

by Edward S. Barkan and Bill Mantlo

To begin with, we've been asked to say something—some few and simple words about the story you are all about to read. Because this story deals with certain aspects of ancient cultures, their legends and myths, and, because much of *THE SWORD IN THE STAR* is based on certain ancient stories, primarily the epics of Homer, it was thought that a little background on these myths and legends might serve to give the reader a better understanding of the tale, as well as refer him to some of the important parallels in historical/

fictional literature.

It's not a difficult task to show how many tales in the modern world, labeled fantasy (some of which are counted among the great works of fiction) have their roots somewhere in the past—in the myths or semi-historical traditions of the ancient Greeks. What modern authors do, basically, is alter the shapes of the primal symbols of their ancient sources to fit the world view of their own particular culture. This had been done even in ancient times. So we see that Virgil's *Aeneid* is

only a "Romanized" reshaping of Homer's *Odyssey*, written to fit the world view of Rome. This was also the basic formula which James Joyce used in constructing his modern *ULYSSES*. Joyce retained the skeletal structure of Homer, reshaping the symbols to fit his modern world view, while Nikos Kazantzakis extended the same theme of the *Odyssey* beyond the structural limits of Homer when he wrote his *MODERN SEQUEL*. Yet, Kazantzakis retained Homer's imagery throughout.

It is Homer, then, and the Ulyssean legends that become our basic subject of comparison. *The Sword* does refer to the Aeneid, the Camelot myths, modern Delphology, Genetics and on and on, ad infinitum but it remains that **THE SWORD IN THE STAR** has borrowed more from the legends of Ulysses than from any or ALL of the others. We have delved deeply into what is known about the Ulyssean world to give our tale a flavor similar to the one that has captivated audiences for more than three thousand years. What we have borrowed, most importantly, is the Odyssey's fundamental quality—The spirit of searching and adventure and the *struggle* that is inherent in that spirit. **THE SWORD IN THE STAR**, like the Odyssey, tells of a man's quest for his place in the universe, his journey toward self-realization. This theme is broad and raises several important points.

What we can define as being most basic to both is that each tale shares the tradition of the *epic*. That's a word we'll be using quite freely; a word which conjures up countless images and just as many misconceptions. So just *what* is an *Epic*?

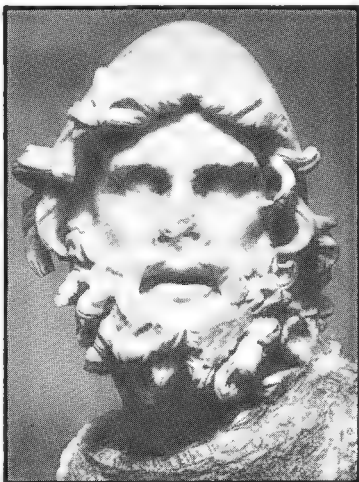
The epic can simply be defined as an extended narrative, either a long poem (usually divided into shorter books), or a long work of prose which celebrates a people's heroic tradition—either of which is easily and joyfully adapted to the comic medium. The epic also celebrates an individual's heroic struggle. Often these two concepts, that of society and the individual, are an interchangeable symbolism; so that the hero Ulysses becomes the hero of Greek society, and his exploits are no longer those of one man, but of the race. They become representative of all people, and they become, finally, representative of mankind's struggle for freedom. In epic and heroic literature *the lone man*, more often than not, represents the struggle of *all mankind*.

Wayfinder exemplified this tradition, in which the individual struggles as the spirit of mankind toward growth and full identity. He struggles against a hostile world in much the same way as does Telemachos, Ulysses son, when he set himself against the suitors who laid waste to his house and siege to his mother while his father was absent. Much can be added, but it would take another and far longer piece just to begin such a task. Suffice to say, the elements within the epic that deal either from a standpoint of society, or from the point of the individual are an inter-

changeable symbolism.

An example of the epic in eastern tradition is the Mahabharata. Considered the longest epic poem ever written (eighteen books long and about ninety-five thousand, five hundred and eight-six stanzas), it is concerned with the great conflict among the descendants of the hero Bharata. One might note that the foundation of our own western culture is grounded in an eastern oral tradition which is epic in its structure: the Old Testament of the Bible. The Bible shares in the epic tradition in that it shows the evolutionary struggle of a *people* and its *ideas*.

Because epics share the same common concepts, if we were to set the Illiad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, Old Testament and Mahabharata side by side and place **THE SWORD IN THE STAR** beside these, one would cer-



tainly come across endless similarities—yet each would have its own characteristic inflections that make it totally a part of its culture or an extrapolation thereof. The epic is not just broad in its *scope*. In most cases it deals *in depth* with the inner character of its participants. In *Wayfinder's* search, as in the search of his first and famous predecessor, Ulysses, we can find much of a deeply human element and, therefore, much of ourselves. As *Wayfinder* is represented, we can experience the entire gamut of his emotions. We share in his constant struggle and are filled with his joy, sorrow, anxiousness, desperation—This struggle moves toward a distant final goal, preceded by lesser goals which mark the stages of growth. The victories are brief and often bitter, and the failures are what failure must always be—*hard!* This is a circle of growth.

We can empathize with the hero on his level and it is this empathy we feel which involves us so deeply in his story. His struggle is of a much greater physical dimension than our own (people do not usually walk out of their apartments to confront dragons or a cyclops), but the heroes of epic fantasy have such privileges. Yet, although the situations seem so much more fantastic than the ones offered in our mundane existences, the heroes responses remain none-the-less human. They are the same as our own.

Mythological worlds, worlds of fantasy, are filled with things which cannot be experienced or observed firsthand by us while we are in the waking world. Therefore, we are bound to fall in love with the fantasy of it all, gripped by the opportunity to experience the amazing, the incredible, the fantastic, or merely the different. Where else but in the work of fantasy (outside of our dreams) can one find heaven or hell, wizards and witches or monsters of every imaginable description; and it is only in the world of fantasy that we can confront these images—perhaps reasserting our own reality. We see them through the eyes of the characters in these stories and their battles and quests become real.

Within the enormous borders of our imaginations, where epic and fantasy reside with the world of dreams, we are given more than the opportunity to observe. Imagination meshes with our own experience. The total effect is that the story entraps us and entrances us. For awhile, we live within that epic world.

Virgil was probably the first author of note to take Homer's themes and adapt them to his culture. His use of the myth was quite similar to the formula of the following story. The Aeneid is the other side of the coin in the Trojan struggle. Where, in the Illiad, the Greeks Triumph, in the Aeneid, Troy has been sacked and defeated in the ten year siege of the Argives, but the remnant of its people, led by the hero Aeneas, is able to escape and travel through the Mediterranean until, in the end, they found the culture which eventually flowers into Rome. This is willed by the king of their gods, Jupiter, who speaks of prophesy from the secret book of fate.

This is another case of prophesy being the springboard for epic struggle. *Wayfinder* also begins his quest in flight and upon the words of prophesy spoken by his dying father—

“ . . . You will see with more than

your eyes—And the sword you bear in blistered hands will glow with the fires of the stars . . .”

Wayfinder, by the word of prophesy, is not simply allowed to forfeit his life into the hands of the conquering Haamin, as he himself would choose, because somewhere there exists a sword in a star; a power carefully hidden by a long dead science. It is a power so great that it could very well shake the foundations of the galaxy.

It is in the hope of finding this power, that no foe could withstand, that Wayfinder, whether through motives

word of mouth or in the written word. Still, among the borrowings, whether conscious or unconscious, you will see many twists and turns of the author's own imagination. These will expand the symbols of the Odyssey, and will turn them to embrace the technology of the far distant future which comprises Wayfinder's world.

It is easily noticeable that there are differences in character between Ulysses and Wayfinder. But the reader must take into account the fact that Homer and the culture he was a part of had only a bronze-age world-view. Homer's im-

place is as alien to us as we might seem, perhaps, to the ancient greeks. Among other things, the fields of Genetics, Biology and Physics have all become mystic arts. They have collectively reshaped the human race.

We think it would serve to try and give you a picture of this type of diverse humanity. We could picture a scale, at which we would find upon the one end, Wayfinder's people. They have remained relatively unchanged, untouched by these new arts. As we move toward the center of the scale, we find that there have developed cultures with various degrees of specialization, such as flight or ability to survive in an airless existence.

Each form had adapted to a particular eco-system. Still farther out, perhaps at the very opposite end of the scale, are the Haamin, a race of men who have changed nearly beyond human cognizance. Each branch on this tree of humanity has developed a culture of varying complexity, based upon an ecological specialization, and yet each branch of this human tree remains definitely *HUMAN*.

It is upon this stage that Wayfinder begins his search for the sword, with only a vague prophesy to follow through the heavens. The planets and places which this unseasoned traveler must visit will at first be strange, sometimes wonderful, sometimes terrifying. He will meet friend and foe, and will occasionally be unable to tell one from the other—but upon each new step, Wayfinder will begin to grow. His quest for *THE SWORD IN THE STAR* will become an education—a baptism of fire. This is the way it must be, so that when he achieves his final goal it will not be an arrogant prince who holds the most awesome weapon in the cosmos, but a man filled with the wisdom of history—a wisdom that was well earned. “The gods have other paths for you to walk,” said the dying king of Ithicon, his father. “...You will see with more than your eyes... and the sword you bear in blistered hands will glow with the fires of the stars!”

If it was prophesy which set the stage for the epic adventures of Ulysses and Aeneas, the one above sets the stage for the fantastic adventures of Wayfinder. His quest will be filled with glory and wonder, just as the quests of his predecessors. But they were bound by the world of their ancient time. Wayfinders shores are unbounded and he is racing though a galaxy where *somewhere* waits *THE SWORD IN THE STAR*!



of vengeance or a truly idealistic motive of hope in an eventual reclamation of his heritage, allows himself to be removed from the Armageddon of Ithicon. Later he is shown a vision of man's history, stripped of the distorted images that have resulted in more than fifteen thousand years of human expansion outward and an inward growing psychic isolation throughout the galaxy. Wayfinder begins to understand the true purpose of the prophesy and, at this point, his real growth begins. For, although he has been trained all his life to battle, that training will be of little use in dealing with the more intangible problems of manhood; responsibility—perhaps, even courage! To be able to deal with a power such as the *Sword*, Wayfinder must gradually realize that he has to change the *person* that is in himself. *The Wielder Must Be Worthy Of The Weapons!*

The writer's craft is, to a degree, to borrow from all experience, whether that experience is from another's life in

agination, therefore, spawned tales from these primitive mythological concepts, filled with the beasts and demons which were at the conceptual limits of their isolated universe. The world-view of Wayfinder is much the same, yet modern man's understanding of the universe has allowed us to borrow from Homer's basic outline, while expanding the world-view to fit the limits of the modern imagination.

Hence, we encounter a galaxy of countless diverse mankinds, some of them literally as *powerful* as *Olympian Gods*, humankinds which seem to be something other than human, though the ancestry of all have sprung from the same *Human* source. Wayfinder's terrors are far deadlier than anything Ulysses faced in his quest, and so are his delights. They have been enlarged in their proportions by the strange sciences of a galactic culture which is pictured to exist more than fifteen hundred centuries in our future.

The time in which this tale takes



THE SWORD in the STAR!

IT HAS NOT BEEN LONG SINCE THE BLACK SHIPS COMPLETED THEIR LAST PASS OVER THE FIELD OF BATTLE--AND THE FLAME OF THEIR PASSING HAS NOT YET COOLED TO CHARCOAL ASH.

THE RAVENS FLY NOW, THEIR OBSCENE CALLS WRINGING COLD TEARS OF RAIN FROM THE APPROACHING DARK CLOUDS AS THEY CIRCLE THE FIELD OF THE DEAD--WAITING FOR A SHORT TIME UNTIL ALL THAT LIVES IS GONE--AND THEIR FEAST BEGINS.

THEIR CRIES FILL THE LIVING FEW WITH REVULSION--FOR THEY KNOW THAT SOON THEIR FLAME-CHARRED BONES WILL LIE STRIPPED OF FLESH AND BLEACHING UPON THE WINDSWEEPED FIELD BESIDE THEIR SLAUGHTERED COMRADES--BUT THE CIRCLE OF WARRIORS DOES NOT MOVE...

...AND THE CLOUDING EYES OF THEIR DYING KING ARE LIT WITH PRIDE FOR THESE MEN OF HIS--THESE STALWART ITHACONS, WHO HAVE LIVED IN HONOR AND WILL DIE IN GLORY FOR THE SAKE OF THE HOME-WORLD! AND THEIR LORD!

THE FLASH OF LASER-CANNONS LIGHT THE HORIZON, MILORD--

--IF THE SCEPTRE IS TO BE PASSED TO YOUR SON, IT MUST BE DONE NOW!

HE SMILES THROUGH THE WAVES OF PAIN THAT WRACK HIS BODY--HIS BLOOD STAINING CRIMSON THE SPARSE GRASS OF THE HILLTOP WHERE HE HAS COMMANDED HIS MEN TO SET HIM DOWN...

...AND HE SMILES AGAIN AT HIS SON--THE YOUNG PRINCE--HE WHO IS CALLED THE WAYFINDER--AND HE KNOWS IT IS TIME TO DIE!

STAVE 1:

ALAS, the SEEDS of MAN!



HE SMILES, THIS KING, DESPITE THE FIRE IN HIS SIDE, WHERE THE HAAMIN WAR-HEAD HAD COME HOME TO ROOST, EXPLODING WITHIN HIM AND TEARING HIS ORGANS TO PIECES.

AND HE TRIES HARD TO HOLD IN THE BLOOD THAT WELLS UP IN HIS MOUTH... STRIVING NOT TO COUGH IT OUT AND SHAME HIS SON OR HIMSELF.

HERE IS YOUR BLADE, MY LORD! IT IS RED WITH THE BLOOD OF THOSE YOU SLEW! LOUD WILL BE THE WAILING OF THE WOMEN ON THE HAAMIN HOME-WORLD THIS NIGHT!

WHERE IS MY SWORD? GODS BUT I DO FEEL STRIPPED WITHOUT IT!

AH, WAYFINDER, MY SON-- YOU DO EVER DELIGHT IN THE METAPHORS OF BATTLE!

I FIND JOY IN WHAT I WAS TRAINED TO DO FROM BIRTH, MY FATHER--AND IT WAS YOU WHO DID TRAIN ME.

WHOO-EEE! YOU FOLKS CAN SURE TALK UP A STREAK WHEN YOU GET STARTED!

NOW HOWS ABOUT CANNIN' THE GAB AN' GETTIN' ON DOWN TO BUSINESS? YOU'RE DYIN', KING OLD BUDDY--

DELPHOS, YOU FOUL, UNSPEAKABLE CUR! I'LL CLEAVE YOU--

NAY, MY SON! LET THE WIZARD HAVE HIS SAY!

I DO BUT FOLLOW HAPPILY ON THE PATH MY PARENT CHOSE FOR ME!

AN' DON'T ACT LIKE YOU AIN'T HEARD THE PROPHECIES-- CAUSE YOU KNOW YOU HAVE!

YOU HESITATE, FATHER? CAN IT BE THIS DOG HAS FERRETED OUT SOME ANCIENT TRUTH YOU HAVE WITHHELD FROM ME? FATHER--?

WAYFINDER-- MY SON--!





AND YOU KNEW ALL THIS, FATHER? YOU KNEW AND DID NOT TELL ME THAT I WAS NEVER TO BE KING OF OUR WORLD?

IT HAD TO BE THUS, MY SON! YOUR LIFE MUST FOLLOW THE PATH THE GODS HAVE LAID OUT FOR YOU-- I KNOW NOT WHAT IT MAY BE! YOU WERE NAMED WAYFINDER, BOY-- AND YOUR NAME IS SUITED TO YOUR FATE!

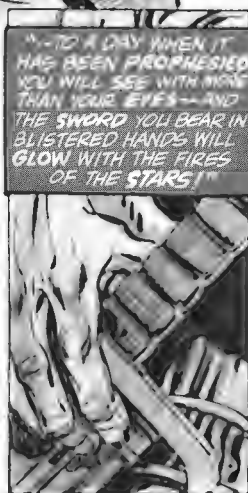
NOW ATTEND MY WORDS! YOU ARE TO GO FROM THIS FIELD OF DEATH ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY THE WIZARD DELPHOS! HE WILL TAKE CHARGE OF YOU UNTIL THE BATTLE IS DONE!



"IT HAS BEEN DECREED THAT I AM TO DIE THIS DAY, MY SON! YOU WILL NOT DIE WITH ME!



"THE GODS HAVE OTHER PATHS FOR YOU TO WALK-- WAYS THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO A TIME WHEN YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR HOME-WORLD--



--TO A DAY WHEN IT HAS BEEN PROMISED YOU WILL SEE WITH MORE THAN YOUR EYES-- AND THE SWORD YOU BEAR IN BLISTERED HANDS WILL GLOW WITH THE FIRES OF THE STARS!



NO! I WILL NOT GO!

WIZARD! SEE THAT HE ACCOMPANIES YOU! MY SOLDIERS WILL ASSIST YOU IF NEED BE!



YOU WOULD DRIVE ME FROM YOU, FATHER? YOU WOULD DIVEST ME OF MY HONOR AS WELL AS MY BIRTH-RIGHT?

VERY WELL, MY LORD! THE BLACK SHIPS OF OUR ENEMIES DRAW NEAR-- BUT YOU HAVE ORDERED THAT I MAY NOT CLAIM MY RIGHT TO DIE DEFENDING OUR WORLD!

YOU ARE THE KING, FATHER-- AND I OBEY MY KING! BUT IF IT IS FATED THAT I AM ONE DAY TO RETURN TO THIS PLANET OF MY BIRTH--

--MAY THAT DAY SEE MY NAME SCREAMED ALOUD TO THE GODS-- AND MAY THEY QUAKE IN FEAR WHEN IT IS LEARNED THAT THE WAY-FINDER HAS FOUND HIS WAY-- AND THAT A NEW KING REIGNS ON ITHACON!

ONE WHO FEARS NO GOD OR MAN-- AND WHO LAUGHS IN THE FACE OF PROPHECY!



COME, WIZARD! THE VULTURES DRAW NEAR TO THE CARCASS OF THE WOLF--AND WE MUST BE FAR FROM HERE BEFORE THEY FEAST!

AIN'T YOU GONNA SAY GOODBYE, BOY? SEEMS KINDA HARD TO LEAVE YOUR DAD LIKE THIS!

I HAVE NO FATHER, WIZARD! LET US GO!

TEARS GLISTEN WETLY IN THE EYES OF THE KING... AND IF HIS SOLDIERS NOTICE, THEY LET IT PASS.

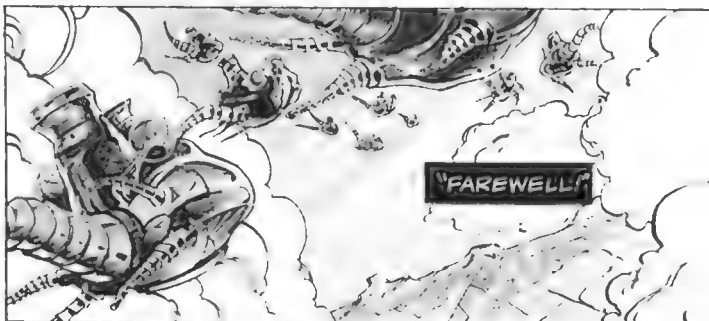
THE LIPS OF THE KING MOVE SILENTLY... HIS FAREWELL TO HIS ONLY SON MUTED BY THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM...



I MUST BE LED, WIZARD! THE WAYFINDER CARES NOT WHICH WAY HE TAKES!

THAT'S OKAY, JUNIOR! I GOT A PLACE A COUPLA MILES FROM HERE WHERE NO HAAMIN IN THE GALAXY WILL EVER FIND US! FOLLOW ME, BOY--FOLLOW ME!

...BUT THE HEART OF THE KING CRIES OUT. "MAY THE GODS PROTECT YOU, MY SON!"



FAREWELL--

MY LORD!



THE KING IS DEAD, WARRIORS!

GIRD HIS SWORD ABOUT HIM! HE WOULD WISH TO HAVE DIED WITH IT IN HIS HAND!

ITHACANS! THEY COME! THE ENEMY COMES!

AT THE FAR EDGE OF THE FIELD OF DEATH...



BUT A STRANGE, FAR-AWAY HUMMING DROWNS OUT THE WIZARD'S WORDS...



... A HUMMING THAT GROWS TO A STEADY DRONE ... AND THEN THE PULSE OF ENGINES BUILT TO SPAN THE STARS...





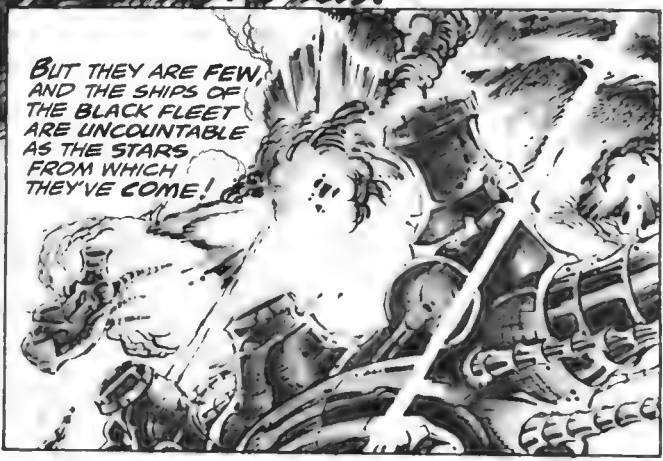
AND THE
FLAMES OF
DEATH
ENGULF
THE LAST
WARRIORS
OF THE
DEAD ARMY
OF THE
DYING
WORLD OF
ITHACON!

THEIR
SCREAMS
ARE LOST
AS LASER-LIGHT
SEARS THROUGH
BONE AND
ARMOR...THE
AIR IS FOUL
WITH BURN-
ING FLESH!



AGAIN, THEIR SCREAMS ARE LOST.

...AS THEIR
OWN SONIC-
DISRUPTORS
ARE HURLED
UPWARD...TEARING
THE FABRIC OF THE
STAR-SHIPS
APART!



BUT THEY ARE FEW,
AND THE SHIPS OF
THE BLACK FLEET
ARE UNCOUNTABLE
AS THE STARS
FROM WHICH
THEY'VE COME!

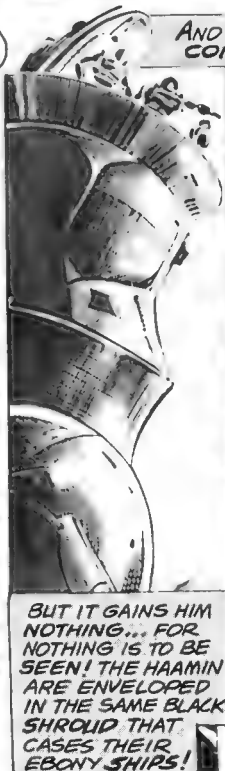
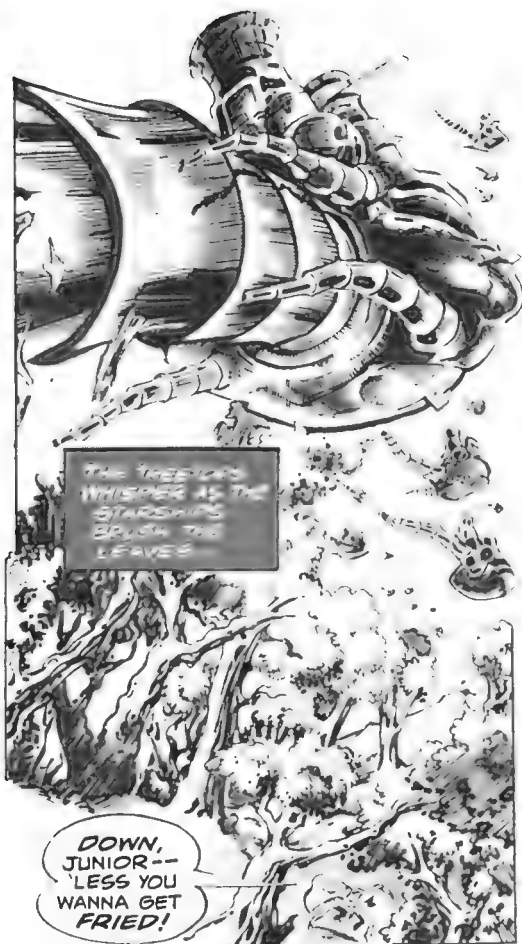


THEY CLOSE FOR THE
KILL, WIZARD!



DEATH!

DEATH!





...AND FAR
ACROSS THE
FIELD OF
WAR, THE
YOUNG
PRINCE
WAYFINDER
THROWS
HIS ARMS
UP BEFORE
HIS FACE...

... AND SCREAMS FROM THE
DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL !

BUT HIS SCREAM IS NOT HEARD...
FOR NONE LIVE NOW UPON THE PLAIN
OF HIS HOME-WORLD TO HEAR IT.

THE HAAMIN FLEET
IS GONE -- THE
CARNAGE ALL
ABOUT HIM THE ONLY
TANGIBLE REMINDER
THAT IT DID, TRULY,
EXIST!

IT'S OVER,
JUNIOR!

THE YOUNG
PRINCE
NODS...

COME ON! THEY'RE
GONNA CIRCLE THE
PLANET A FEW TIMES,
LOOKIN' WITH THEIR TRACERS
FOR SIGNS OF LIFE -- AN' I
WANT US TO BE LONG GONE
WHEN THEY HIT THIS SIDE
OF TOWN AGAIN!

...AND
WORD-
LESSLY
TURNS AND
FOLLOWS
THE BLACK
ENIGMA
THAT IS
THE WIZARD
DELPHOS
INTO THE
FOREBODING
DEPTHS OF
THE BURNT
AND
TWISTED
NIGHTMARE
THAT WAS
ONCE THE
ROYAL
FOREST.

LET'S GO...
HUH, KID?

AND IF THE WIZARD HEARS THE MUFFLED SOBS FROM
HIS YOUNG COMPANION, HE PRETENDS IT IS NOTHING
MORE THAN THE SIGH OF THE WIND IN THE VANISHED
LEAVES OF THE BLACKENED STUMPS THAT ONCE WERE
TREES ABOUT THEM.

THE MOONS, CIRCE AND
NAUSIKAA, RISE ABOVE
THEM...

...AND ARE CLOSE TO
SETTING WHEN AT LAST
THEY REACH...

HOME,
BOY!
WE
MADE
IT!

WHAT NEW JOKE
IS THIS, WIZARD?
YOU HAVE DONE NAUGHT
BUT **BABBLE** OF THINGS
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
AND NOW YOU POINT TO
A **HOLE** IN THE EARTH
AND TELL ME WE
ARE HOME!

HAVE IT *YOUR* WAY, KIDDO!
ALL I BEEN TRYIN' TO DO
WAS TELL YOU SOME THINGS
YOU MIGHT NOT'VE KNOWN
ABOUT YOUR OLD MAN!

HE WAS A GOOD
KING--YOUR POP!
A LITTLE **STUBBORN**,
MAYBE, BUT QUICK TO
FIGURE OUT THAT THERE
WAS A LOT OF THINGS
GOIN' ON THAT HE DID
NOT KNOW ABOUT!

THE KIND OF THINGS
THAT I COULD LAY ON
HIM! WHERE THE #%*
IS THAT **SWITCH**?

WHAT
THINGS,
WIZARD?
AND
WHAT IS A
SWITCH?

OH, LOTS O'
THINGS--AH!
HERE IT IS!

--AND **PRESTO!**
WELCOME TO MY
INNER SANCTUM,
JUNIOR! FOOD'S
NOT THE **BEST**,
BUT WE TRY!

BY THE
GODS!

NOPE! THE **GODS**
HAD NOTHIN' TO
DO WITH **THIS**,
PRINCELING!
CAN'T BLAME YOU
FOR BEIN' **SPOOKED**,
THO'--YOUR DADDY
WAS TOO, FIRST TIME
I **SHOWED** HIM
THIS PLACE!

HE WAS A **TOUGH**
OLD BUZZARD THO'--
CAUGHT ON **QUICK**!
SOON'S I LAYED THE
'TEACHER' ON HIM,
THAT IS!

WONDER UPON WONDER
STRETCHES BEFORE THE
STARTLED EYES OF THE
BARBARIAN PRINCE OF
ITHACON! MAGIC...THAT
HE KNEW, OR THOUGHT HE
DID! HADN'T THE PRIESTS
SPOKE OF MAGIC AS A
GIFT OF THE GODS AS
THEY PEEPED AMONGST
THE BLOODY ENTRAILS OF
A FOWL--THAT
WAS **MAGIC**! BUT THIS...

BY THE GODS!
I AM LED BY
A **MADMAN**!!



MIRACLE UPON
MIRACLE AS HIS
GREY EYES DART
IN ALL DIRECTIONS
AT ONCE--SEE-
ING ALL AND
UNDERSTANDING
NONE OF WHAT
THEY TAKE IN--

IT'S CALLED SCIENCE
JUNIOR! USED TO BE QUITE
POPULAR ABOUT--OH--
FIFTEEN THOUSAND
YEARS AGO!!

--BUT REMEMBERING, DIM IN
THE FARTHEST REACHES OF HIS
DREAMS, MEMORIES OF THINGS
HE'S NEVER SEEN.



HAVE A LOOK
AROUND WHILE I
SET UP THE 'TEACHER'!

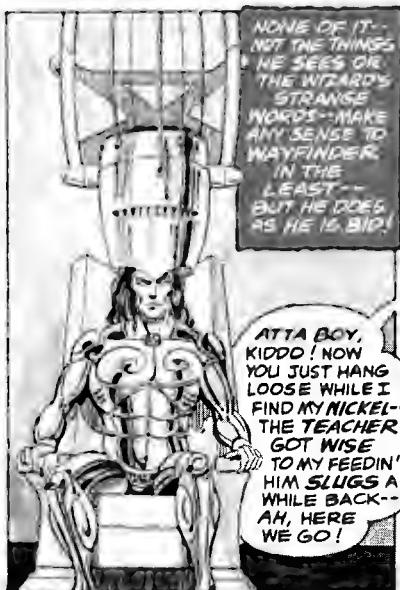
THIS HERE'S THE
TEACHER, KIDDO!
C'MERE AN' LET ME
FIX IT ON YOUR
HEAD!

THIS--
THIS IS
MAD-
NESS,
WIZARD!
IT IS--

BUT DON'T TOUCH
ANYTHING UNLESS
YOU TASTE IT FIRST--
AND IF IT KILLS YOU,
DON'T TOUCH IT
TWICE!!

YEAH, YEAH! ANOTHER
TIME, HUH, KID! IT'S GONNA
TAKE ONE HELL OF AN
ENERGY DRAIN TO KNOCK
SOME SENSE INTO THAT
THICK HEAD OF YOURS--
AND A DRAIN THAT BIG IS
SURE TO BRING THE
HAAMIN DOWN ON US
BEFORE WE CAN SAY
JIMINY CRICKET!

SO GET
YOUR TAIL
OVER
HERE AN'
SIT
DOWN!
O.K.?



NONE OF IT--
NOT THE THINGS
HE SEES OR
THE WIZARD'S
WORDS--MAKE
ANY SENSE TO
WAYFINDER,
IN THE
LEAST--
BUT HE DOES
AS HE IS BID!

ATTA BOY,
KIDDO! NOW
YOU JUST HANG
LOOSE WHILE I
FIND MY NICKEL--
THE TEACHER
GOT WISE
TO MY FEEDIN'
HIM SLUGS A
WHILE BACK--
AH, HERE
WE GO!



THIS ONLY GETS YOU
ONE SHOW,
PRINCEING, SO PAY
ATTENTION!

IT WOULD HAVE
BEEN CHEAPER TO
LET YOU HAVE YOUR
OWN WAY BACK THERE
ON THE BATTLEFIELD
AN' LET YOU GO UP IN
SMOKE! OH WELL--



WAYFINDER HEARS THE CLINK
OF THE COIN AS IT'S FED IN-
TO A SLOT SOMEWHERE IN
THE DEVICE THAT SITS UPON
HIS HEAD...

...AND HE HEARS THE DEVICE
BEGIN TO WHIR, FEELS THE
JAB OF TINY PINPRICKS AS
ELECTRODES PIERCE HIS
SCALP...

... AND HE SCREAMS AS HIS MIND FLARES INTO BRILLIANCE!

"HANG ON TO YOUR SEAT, JUNIOR! HERE WE GO!!!"

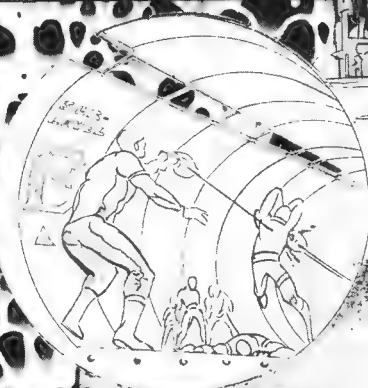
...and the HOME-WORLD of MAN had been called...the EARTH, and it was no longer GOOD! Man had FILTHIED his SEAS, stripped bare his LANDS, 'til all was WASTE about him...and MAN could not LIVE with his own DESTRUCTION! So he built the SILVER SHIPS, and the SEED of MAN was sown across the STARS, penetrating to the EDGE of the galaxy and BEYOND—

in the STARS man found sometimes PARADISE—



sometimes HELL—if he reached new worlds at ALL! For there were those whose ships were rent ASUNDER by shifting SOLAR WINDS—

—and those whose ships were torn by the PASSIONS of men, passions that went ever WITH man on his voyages to the STARS!



"But it is EVER man's lot to SURVIVE—and to survive man needed to CHANGE! In places he changed the WORLD he'd chosen to fit HIMSELF—in places he changed HIMSELF to fit the WORLD!"

Man ADAPTED—man LIVED!"

GODS!

"NO, KIDDO-- NOT GODS-- MAN!"

"MAN DID IT ALL HIMSELF! KEEP WATCHIN', JUNIOR!
HERE'S WHERE IT GETS HEAVY!"

And in time the races of man forgot the EXISTENCE
of the OTHERS—and each world, each STAR-SYSTEM—
grew to FEAR what they felt was 'DIFFERENT' from their
own evolutionary PROGRESSION..."

"KNOWLEDGE,
SCIENCE, all began
to FALL before the
onslaught of BARBARISM—
the principle of the STAR-
STATE, the PLANET-STATE, the
ISOLATED MAN casting man into
a DARK AGES the like of which
he has NEVER KNOWN
BEFORE!"

"...and man FOUGHT AGAIN—
as he has ALWAYS fought—
but THIS time the BATTLEFIELD
was the GALAXY, not a pitiful little
PLANET that could harm none but
ITSELF!"

"Stars were moved from their ORBITS,
their worlds either FREEZING or
BURNING UP—their peoples
DESTROYED!"

"...and whose RETURN may very well mark the END of
Man as he is KNOWN—for tho' of HUMAN ORIGIN—
the Haamin are—'DIFFERENT'—changed by whatever lays
BEYOND our KNOWLEDGE!"

"And at the NADIR of CIVILIZATION come the HAAMIN—
evolved man from beyond the EDGE of the GALAXY!
Lost races of man who fled into MADNESS and the UN-
KNOWN at the finish of the EARTH eons before..."

"And man, in his present, barbaric state of DISSOLUTION,
does not stand a CHANCE before these murderous CON-
QUERORS from beyond the FRINGE!"

HOW IS IT
POSSIBLE?

OH, IT'S POSSIBLE ALL
RIGHT, JUNIOR!

WE SHAFTED OURSELVES
GOOD FOR A WHOLE BUNCH
OF CENTURIES! I KNOW,
BOY!

I WAS THERE!

WAYFINDER REMOVES THE DEVICE KNOWN AS THE TEACHER... SURE THAT ITS BULK HAS CAUSED HIM TO HEAR WRONGLY THE WIZARD'S LAST STATEMENT...

DON'T LOOK SO SHOCKED, STRIPLING! SCIENCE HAD GOTTEN PRETTY FAR WHILE ALL THAT WAS GOIN' DOWN!

FAR ENOUGH LEAST-WAYS TO KEEP A MAN ALIVE FOR ABOUT TEN THOUSAND YEARS! I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST! A MILD-MANNERED CHEMIST WHO GOT CHOSEN TO BE METHUSALAH!

YOU--YOU SAW ALL THAT THIS--THIS DEVICE CAUSED TO APPEAR IN MY MIND!

WIZARD! YOU ARE MAD!

I'M MAD, HUH, KIDDO? YOU JUST WATCHED YOUR OLD MAN GET FRIED A WHILE BACK AND YOU GOT THE GALL TO TALK ABOUT MADNESS!

YOU SNOT-NOSED WHELP!

YOUR FATHER DUG ON ALL OF THIS--BUT HE COULDN'T CHANGE IT! HE WAS LOCKED INTO ALL THAT HONOR AND KINGDOM CRAP AND COULDN'T EVER GET HIMSELF OUT OF IT!

BUT YOU--HE PINNED ALL HIS HOPES ON YOU AND A LEGEND WE DUG UP ON ONE OF THE TAPES ABOUT A WEAPON THE SCIENTISTS HAD HIDDEN JUST BEFORE THE COMING OF THE HAMMIN!

A WEAPON SO STRONG THAT IT MIGHT JUST GET THIS CRUMMY BIOLOGICAL NIGHTMARE CALLED MAN BACK ON HIS FEET--AND ON SOME KINDA PATH UP AGAIN!

THAT FLASHING BEACON, WIZARD! WHAT--?

ALERT

WE TOOK TOO LONG, BOY! THEY'VE FOUND US!

THE HAMMIN HAVE LOCATED THE CAVERN!

THAT WILL NOT HOLD THEM LONG, WIZARD! WE MUST ARM OURSELVES AND FIGHT THEM!

THERE GOES WHOEVER TRIED TO MOVE THE STONE WITHOUT THE COMBINATION!

WE'VE GOT A FEW SECONDS! WE CAN STILL MAKE IT TO THE SHIP!

IN A PIG'S EYE, WE'LL FIGHT THEM! DID YOU FALL ON YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU WERE A KID?

AGAIN I MUST RUN RATHER THAN STAND AND DIE WITH HONOR!

BY THE GODS, WIZARD! I LIKE IT NOT!

WHAT YOU LIKE OR DON'T LIKE AIN'T MY AFFAIR, JUNIOR--

APOLLO AND APHRODITE!
WHAT WONDERMENT IS THIS!?!

--BUT SAVIN' MY TEN THOUSAND YEAR OLD NECK-- THAT RANKS HIGH ON MY LIST OF PRIORITIES!

SHE SITS QUIET... THE STAR-CURRENTS HIDDEN FROM THE DELICATE SOLAR-SENSORS THAT, WHEN TOUCHED BY THE DIM AND DISTANT LIGHT OF FAR-AWAY SUNS, WILL FILL HER SILVER SAILS AND LIFT HER FROM HER ROCK-BOUND ANCHOR.

A SHIP!

AND THEN HE RUNS, THE YOUNG PRINCE WITH NO MORE HIS HEART SMILING AS HE HEARS THE MIMICRY CRY...

WE'VE GOT TO CAST OFF, BOY! THEY'LL BE ON US ANY SECOND NOW!

...AND IT IS A SONG OF EXULTATION AS HIS SANDALLED FEET TOUCH THE GLEAMING DECK. A SHIP...

QUIT STARING, YOU SIMPLE-MINDED BARBARIAN!

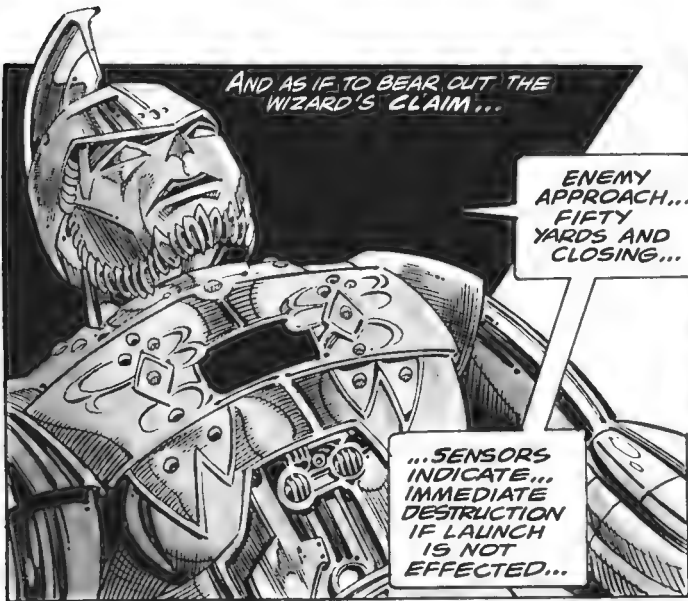
HER NAME, HE KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY, IS STAR-SEED... A VESSEL THAT WILL CARRY MAN... THAT WILL CARRY HIM... TO THOSE DISTANT POINTS OF BRILLIANCE, AND HIS DESTINY IN THE HEAVENS!

...HIS SHIP!

GET TO THE BOW, PRINCELING! ALKINOOS HERE WILL STEER US ONCE I PUNCH OUT THE COURSE!

ALKINOOS? HE IS A MACHINE, WIZARD!

A COMPUTER, BOY! AND HE'S GOT FEELINGS-- SO WATCH HOW YOU TALK ABOUT HIM!



AND AS IF TO BEAR OUT THE WIZARD'S CLAIM...

ENEMY APPROACH...
FIFTY
YARDS AND
CLOSING...

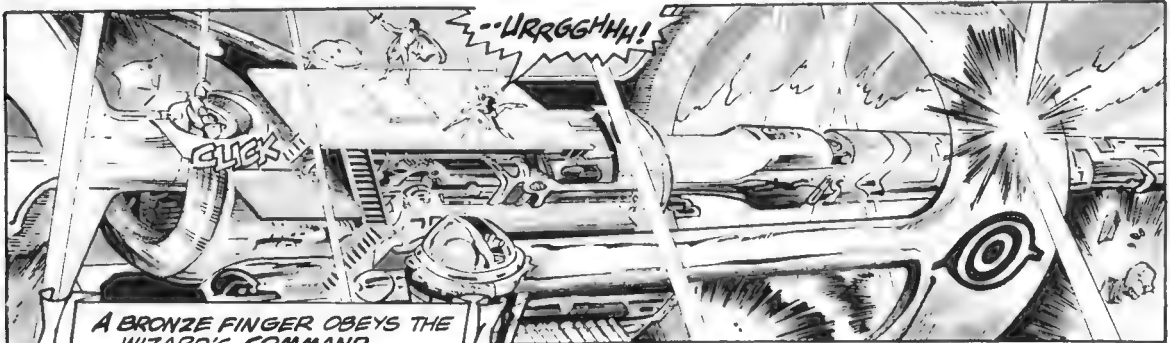
...SENSORS
INDICATE...
IMMEDIATE
DESTRUCTION
IF LAUNCH
IS NOT
EFFECTED...



LASER-FIRE SWEEP ACROSS
THE SLEANNING DECK

COME ON, YOU ALIEN
SCUM! WITH A SHIP
BENEATH ME I'LL NOT
RUN NOW!

LIFT
OFF,
ALKINOOS--



...URRGHHH!

CLICK

A BRONZE FINGER OBEYS THE
WIZARD'S COMMAND...



...AND THE STAR-SHIP
SHEDS AS THE LIGHT
FROM THE SKY-PRICES IN
THE NIGHT SKY ABOVE THE
CAVERN REACH ITS DRIVE-
FOIL



...SWELLING THE
SAIL ABOVE
THE RAGING PRINCE,
WHOSE SWORD
SENDS LETHAL
WAVES OF SOUND
DOWN UPON HIS
BLACK-CLAD FOES.



OBSERVATION:
SHIP IS OUT OF
RANGE OF ENEMY
FIRE!

...WE ARE
LAUNCHED!

DELPHOS!
YOU'RE
HURT!

HAPPENS TO THE **BEST** OF
US, KID! TEN THOUSAND YEARS
IS ONE **HELL** OF A TIME TO
HANG OUT IN THIS CRUMMY
UNIVERSE!



QUIET, WIZARD!
YOU ARE LOSING
TOO MUCH
BLOOD!

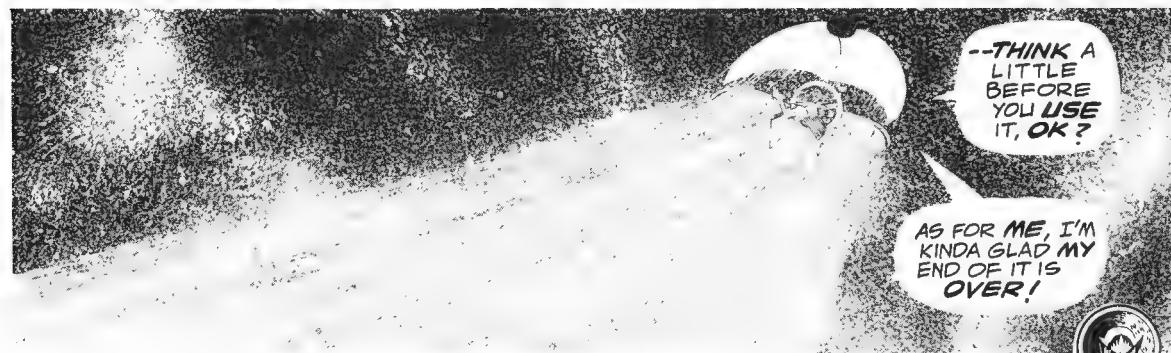
IT'S THERE
TO BE LOST,
JUNIOR! BUT
LISTEN, WILL
YOU 2 ALKINOOS
IS PROGRAMMED--
HE'LL GET YOU AS
FAR AS HE CAN
WITH THE CO-
ORDINATES I
GAVE HIM--
AFTER THAT
YOU'RE ON
YOUR OWN!

DO ME A
FAVOR,
HUH, KID?

YOU NEED BUT ASK IT,
WIZARD, AND IF I AM
ABLE, I WILL SEE
THAT IT IS DONE!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT
THAT PROPHECY JAZZ
WAS ALL ABOUT--
ALL THAT ABOUT YOU'LL
SEE MORE THAN WITH
YOUR EYES AND HOLD
A SWORD IN YOUR MITTS
THAT BLAZES LIKE THE
STARS!

BUT, JUNIOR--
IF YOU DO
FIND IT--



--THINK A
LITTLE
BEFORE
YOU USE
IT, OK?

AS FOR ME, I'M
KINDA GLAD MY
END OF IT IS
OVER!



JUST A LITTLE OVER

A YEAR AGO TODAY...

...then editor of Marvel's black-and-white line, Mary Welfman, asked me to create a back-up feature for a black-and-white new sci-fi mag that was to be called **STARLORD**, after the lead character, a kind of cosmic cowboy, given life by Steve Englehart.

The mag was to be a bi-monthly, and my feature was to have a definite duration (I think we planned ten or twelve issues) and was to end at a specific point, all loose ends tied up, but with the possibility of continuing were reader reaction overwhelmingly in favor of keeping it. At the time, I recall being intrigued by the prospect of a self-articled stop continuity being one of the main concerns at Marvel, most writers never even think in terms of ending things completely) and the more thought I gave it, the more the idea of an odyssey took shape in my mind. A quest, a journey both in the physical and the, dare we say it, cosmic realm in which the heroes would pass through definite stages of consciousness as they drew near their goal.

Now came the question! Who were these heroes to be, and what was to be their goal?

Well, that wasn't as hard as I thought it'd be. I've always been attuned to mythology, and remembered vividly the days of my youth spent poring over Homer and Tennyson, imagining myself on a hilltop overlooking the plain of Ithaca as the hordes of Achaeans swarmed over the blood-soaked no-man's land between their gleaming ships on shore and the embattled citadel of Pium and his sons. Troy. And interwoven with those images of proud Greeks beneath waving horse-hair plumes, or jealous, bickering gods and goddesses, or one-eyed giants who decked passing sailors, or women beautiful enough to wage war that was to last more than a decade, came other images, tapestries of other times, and to the comingling of the ages the mythological sources of the **SWORD IN THE STAR** began to lend their form to my epic of yet another one... a time set apart by millennia, far in the unknown ponds of the future! The **SWORD IN**

THE STAR began.

A fantasy writer is like unto a god. Say the word and planets are born, peopled, and destroyed. And the head and vast areas of even vaster galaxies cease rotating around the fulcrum point of the heavens and turn, retracing their steps and throwing all known order into chaos. Raise but one finger and all that is lovely becomes deformed and base, all that is base becomes beautiful.

At least on paper.

Because then comes the hard part. This self-styled god must then find that the rights to creation are not, and cannot be, exclusive. He may have the initial concept, but it takes the man with the 2H Pencil to solidify the concept into fact and, friend, that is the true test of godhood in this business. But first the idea.

I envisioned my hero as a young prince of a long-ance earth-colonized planet thousands of millions of light years from their world of origin. I saw him as brash, a warrior born and bred, the son of a strong king. I drew again on Homer, and the son of the famous Ulysses, Telemachus, gradually became transformed into Prince Wayfinder of the planet Ithacon, and his story began on the day of his father's, and his homeworld's, death!

Prince Wayfinder had a hard time dealing with that. Not so much the destruction, not so much the dying... but the fact that he, a warrior, was forbidden by his father to be a part of it. Quite a kick in the teeth for a kid who's out to make a name for himself in the glory game not to be allowed to die with his boots on while everybody around him was in the process of having *tholes* fired off by the ray cannons of the Haamin fleet. Chaperoned by the Head Wizard, a ten-thousand-year-old molecular biologist turned spiritual advisor and Miss Lonelyhearts to the Court of Ithacon, it was one angry, frustrated youth who left the field of battle and turned back only once, just in time to see the Haamin ships reduce his father's army to ashes; and not even tears could

wash that sight away. And for a second there, in the best warrior tradition, he contemplated throwing himself on his sword.

but Delphos had other plans for this young hothead of a prince, and they definitely did not include having to hose down the floor of his Sunetian Sanctum with disinfectant just because Wayfinder couldn't take the present situation. Y'see, for all his savage sword of Wayfinder jive, the kid was a provincial, badly in need of some savvy about big universe ways! And that was where Delphos came in.

He plunked the kid in a chair and lowered a mass of steel and wires over his head that he called "The Teacher." What it was was a memory amplifier chock full of mind-tapes of the past twenty or so millennia, back to the time earth was abandoned as a dead and frozen world and man hooted it to the stars. For a kid from the future, it wasn't easy finding out that he wasn't the *only* pea in the pod, and that some of the other off-shoots of humanity didn't even seem to share a *want* to share... his specific and rather treasured sense of loneliness. Indeed, most of them weren't even aware that Ithacon was the center of the universe!

Well, you can see that Wayfinder had a lot to learn, and no machine, no matter how good, was gonna knock sense into a skull as thick as his in a day or a year or maybe even a lifetime! Nope, the sense would have to come with experience, and experience began making itself known as the Haamin ships, scanning the burned-out planet for telltale signs of life, locked onto two functioning brain-wave patterns, Wayfinder's and mine in the mind-tapes of the "Teacher." The black ships of the Haamin struck, tearing apart the Wizard's underground HQ as if it were organic, and leaving the son of the House of Ithacon and his black companion, the 10 millenia man, highailing a forsworn life deeper into the cavern to the cone of a long extinct volcano where, unbeknownst to Wayfinder, the Wizard had stored his eye. And the gleaming form of the starship **STARSEED**

sat quietly at rest, her solar-sails spread, awaiting the anti-polarization that would open them to the stellar-force and send her sailing through the open vastness of space.

Wayfinder had never seen such a ship, save in the pages of the Holy Star Annals wherein the great migration had been pictured, and he'd always thought that no more than a story to put children to sleep with. Now he knew different.

but there wasn't any time to dwell on it, 'cause the Haamin had come, and, vaulting aboard, Wayfinder turned his sonic sword on the attacking black ships, holding them off, while the Wizard ordered his humanized computer, dubbed Aikinos, to lift the **Starseed** from her moorings.

and up out into space, leaving Ithacon and the slower Haamin ships no more than a rapidly dwindling memory. But it was Delphos' last act, for a Haamin blast had caught him in the back, and he knew that even a ten thousand-year-old man wasn't immortal. Wayfinder wept, and the Wizard saw that the warrior, for all his unbroken resistance, was little more than a frightened boy, and the Wizard felt a sorrow for Wayfinder that even the prophecy about the young prince finding a sword that would glow with the light of the stars and blaze like a thousand suns, could not dispel, and, well, there's a time for prophecy, and a time for death, and for Delphos the latter had come calling, panically, all those centuries not putting off the Reaper in the least.

But Delphos gave his student one last bit of advice. It went like this, as **Starseed**, piloted by a robot, soared out into space.

"I don't know what that PROPHECY JAZZ was all about—that you'll see with more than your EYES and hold a **SWORD** in your mits that blazes like the STARS—but, guess—if you DO find it—THINK a little before you USE it, O.K."

"As for ME, I'm kinda glad MY end of it is OVER!"

God the Writer's work was done, and Ed Hannigan, Craig Russell and Rick Bryant proceeded to weave the elements of creation into a veritable Sistine Comic Book. I have been blessed. The three artists mentioned turned out a book that was truly cosmic in its beauty, and Keith Giffen, this issue's co-creator, while approaching it with a style all his own, has in no way diminished the grandeur and stark loveliness of the second phase of Wayfinder's quest, and his own touches (Rocky Raccoon, for one) have opened up entirely new vistas for exploration. The Lord is happy, and His typewriter smiles.

But the *audience* of the thing (i.e. is this the end? Unwean, **STARLORD** never got more than one issue, the **SWORD IN THE STAR** only two, and that because this episode was already done when the word came down to throw it into MARVEL PREVIEW and hold off on future episodes. The letters were all favorable, but letters just aren't enough to give a publisher an incentive to continue publishing. Only sales figures are.

So think on it. If you want to see the **SWORD IN THE STAR** go on, write, yes, but buy the book, and get a friend to buy it with you, and give out copies as Christmas presents. What can we say? We want it to come back... now it's up to you.

—BILL MANTLO

Illustration by Terry Austin



B-141

IF THERE WERE SOUND, IT
WOULD BE THE SOFT SLICING
OF BOW THROUGH WAVE.

THERE IS
NO SOUND.

IF THERE WERE SENSATIONS
OF MOVEMENT, THEY WOULD
BE CAUSED BY THE STEADY
PRESSURE OF WIND PUSHING
AGAINST A FULLNESS OF SAIL.

THERE IS MOVEMENT... THOUGH
THERE IS NO SENSATION OF IT,
AND IT IS NOT WIND THAT
STRETCHES THE DELICATE SILVER
SAILS.

IT IS THE STARS.

NEAR STARS.
FAR STARS. LIGHT.

FROM A MILLION DEAD AND DYING,
LIVE AND LIVING, FIERCELY BURNING SUNS.

AND THERE IS
NO SOUND, SAVE
THE MOURNING
OF A MAN.

THE SWORD

STAR!

THE CONTINUATION OF
THE LEGEND OF PRINCE
WAYFINDER OF ITHACON
--A MODERN ULYSSES
--BEGUN IN MARVEL
PREVIEW #4.

OBSERVATION:
SENSORS INDICATE
ZERO PRESENCE OF
HAAMIN PURSUIT
SHIPS.

SUGGESTED PROGRAMME!
BURY OUR DEAD AND GO
TO GROUND.

DO YOU
HEAR,
WIZARD?

EVEN TO ONE
YOU CREATED
YOU EXIST AS
NAUGHT BUT A
MEMORY!

STAVE 2:

WITCH WORLD!



AND WHAT, THEN, AM I?

WHO IS WAYFINDER? WIZARD?

BUT A YOUTH WHO MISSES THY JESTING AND THY GUIDANCE! A YOUTH WHO IS LOST IN THE DEEPS OF SPACE!

INCORRECT: POSITION KNOWN. STAR-ANAL IDENTIFICATION PLACES US IN THE SOLAR SPHERE OF TAU CETI / CODE-FIX CETUS.

TWELVE PLANETS. ONE SUPPORTIVE OF CARBON BASED LIFE-FORMS AND SUPPORTING SUCH INDIGENOUS FORMS.

I ... HAVE NEVER SEEN ANOTHER WORLD, ALKINOS.

THE AGE OF MY-- MY CONFIRMATION HAD NOT YET BEEN REACHED WHEN ITHACON WAS DESTROYED!

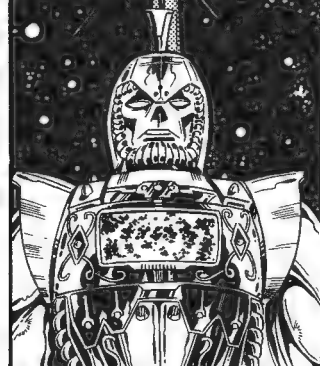
HAVE YOU ANY ORDERS ... CAPTAIN?

I-- TAKE US IN, HELMSMEN.

HE HUMORS ME, WIZARD. HE KNOWS I HAVE NEVER GUIDED A SHIP! NEVER SEEN DEEP-SPACE!

YET HIS HUMOR IS... SUPPORTIVE OF ME. PROTECTIVE!

AS IF HE EXPECTS ONE DAY TO HAVE TO PLACE HIMSELF IN MY TRUST... AND WISHES ME TO BE READY!

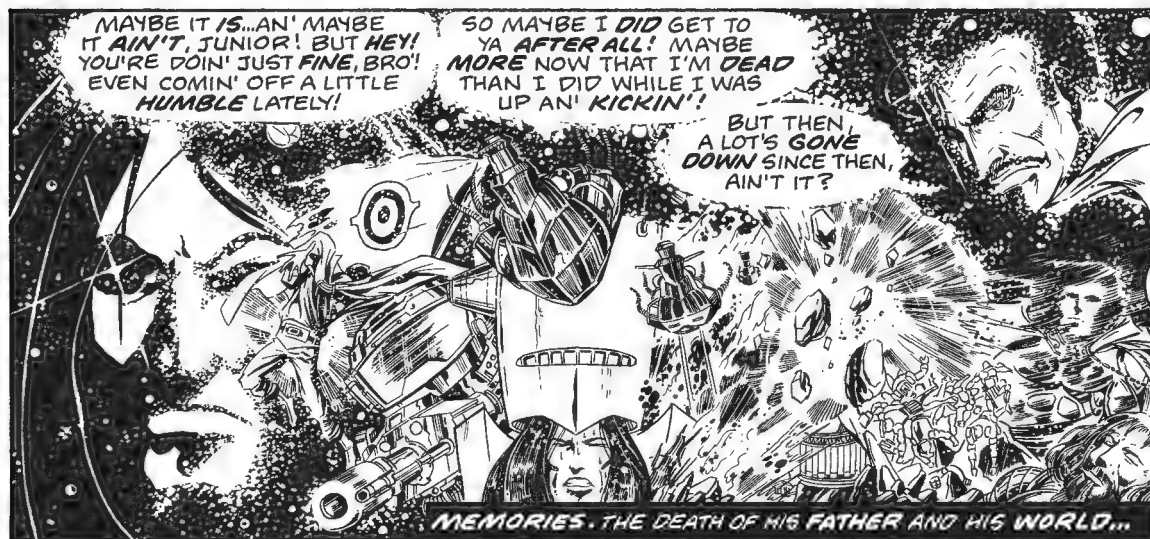


VERY WELL, CAPTAIN. LANDING COORDINATES PLOTTED.

ESTIMATED TIME OF PLANET-FALL: FIVE MINUTES.



IS THAT ANOTHER OF YOUR GIFTS TO ME WIZARD?



MAYBE IT IS...AN' MAYBE IT AIN'T, JUNIOR! BUT HEY! YOU'RE DOIN' JUST FINE, BRO! EVEN COMIN' OFF A LITTLE HUMBLE LATELY!

SO MAYBE I DID GET TO YA AFTER ALL! MAYBE MORE NOW THAT I'M DEAD THAN I DID WHILE I WAS UP AN' KICKIN'!

BUT THEN, A LOT'S GONE DOWN SINCE THEN, AIN'T IT?

MEMORIES. THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER AND HIS WORLD...

...AND THE AWAKENING IN HIM OF MEMORIES WHOSE EXISTENCE HE'D NEVER SUSPECTED.



THE TEACHER HUMMED IN HIS MIND. PICTURES OF TIME LOST AND TIME FOUND. PICTURES OF WORLDS WITHOUT END.

BUT THE TEACHING TOOK TOO LONG! THE HAAMIN SHIPS TAPPED ONTO THE POWER SOURCE OF THE 'TEACHER' AND LOCATED THE WIZARD'S CAVE...



...AND DELPHOS DIED TRYING TO GET THE YOUNG PRINCE TO SAFETY.

DIED TO SAVE ME! DIED SO THAT THE STAR-SEED COULD BE LAUNCHED! DIED THAT I MIGHT LIVE TO FULFILL MY DESTINY--

-- A DAY WHEN IT HAS BEEN PROPHESIED THAT I WILL SEE WITH MORE THAN MY EYES, AND WILL BEAR A SWORD IN BLISTERED HANDS THAT WILL GLOW WITH THE FIRES OF THE STARS!

FOR THAT MY PLANET PERISHED!

FOR THAT!



MY PRINCE...



ALKINOOS?



IT IS TIME, MY PRINCE.

TIME? OH. THE BURIAL.

GUIDE ME THEN AGAIN, HELMSMEN! CHANT AND I WILL REPEAT YOUR SONG!



DANCE AND I WILL MIME THE MOVEMENTS.



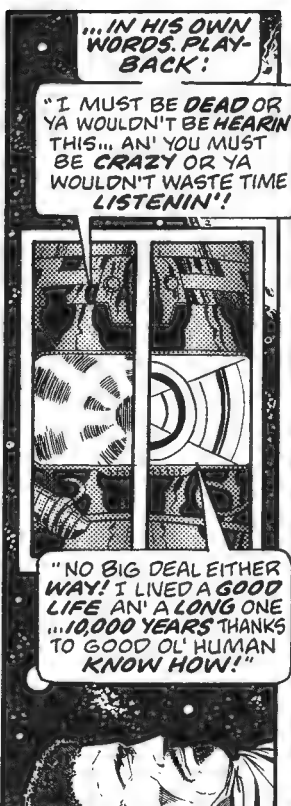
THERE IS NO CEREMONY,
MY PRINCE.

DELPHOS... MY
CREATOR... WAS
A SCIENTIST.

HE WAS
ALSO A MAN!
A TEACHER
IN THE SERVICE
OF MY
FATHER!

THERE MUST BE A
FUNERAL RITE OR
HIS SOUL WILL NEVER
FIND ITS REST!

VERY WELL.
A EULOGY,
PERHAPS...



...IN HIS OWN
WORDS. PLAY-
BACK:

"I MUST BE DEAD OR
YA WOULDN'T BE HEARIN'
THIS... AN' YOU MUST
BE CRAZY OR YA
WOULDN'T WASTE TIME
LISTENIN'!"

"NO BIG DEAL EITHER
WAY! I LIVED A GOOD
LIFE AN' A LONG ONE
...10,000 YEARS THANKS
TO GOOD OL' HUMAN
KNOW HOW!"



PORTAL OPEN
IN INNER SHIELD.

"I DONE SOME
THINGS I'M PROUD
OF... AN' SOME THINGS
I AIN'T-- AN' HAD A
LOT OF FUN ALONG
THE WAY--

"-- BUT NOW I'M
DEAD AN' THEY DON'T
MATTER! NONE OF
'EM!



"BUT LISTEN-- IF YOU'RE
HEARIN' THIS YA MUST BE
WITH ALKINDOS-- AN' THAT
MEANS YA MUST BE WORTH
SOMETHIN' THAT ROBOT'S
OKAY, JACK! CHECK HIM
OUT! DO WHAT HE SAYS--"

TRACTOR BEAMS
LOCKING ON BODY.
LIFTING TO OUTER
SHIELD.

"--AN' YOU'LL
COME OUT ALL
RIGHT! ME--
I'M TIRED--"

OUTER
SHIELD
OPEN.

"-- AN' THIS IS ONE REST
I'M GONNA ENJOY! FOR
A LONG... LONG TIME!"

SCIENCE OR NO--
A MAN DESERVES TO
GO TO HIS GODS
WITH SONG!

AND IF YOU
WILL NOT SING
HELMSMEN-- THEN
WAYFINDER WILL
PLAY THE
CHORUS!

AND SWEAR
VENGEANCE
UPON HIS
SLAYERS!!



OUTER
PORTAL
SEALED.



IT IS DONE,
MY PRINCE.

HAVE WE
ANY WINE ON
BOARD,
ALKINOOS?

NO, MY
PRINCE.

THERE
MUST BE A
LIBATION,
HELMSMAN--



--AN OFFERING TO THE
STARS! PAYMENT FOR DELPHOS'
JOURNEY!

YOU CUT YOUR
FOREARM, MY PRINCE?



BLOOD,
ALKINOOS!

BLOOD
SHALL BE THE
OFFERING.



"MAY THE GODS TAKE
YOU, MY TEACHER--

--DESPITE YOUR
MANY SINS!"



NOW,
HELMSMAN--WHAT
HAVE WE IN THE
WAY OF
PROVISIONS?



NOTHING, MY PRINCE.
THERE WAS NO TIME.

BUT THE PLANET WE
ARE APPROACHING
IS RICH IN ORGANIC
MATTER.

IT IS ALSO
FAR FROM THE
HAAMIN SPHERE
OF OPERATION.



THEN WE LAND,
HELMSMAN! BUT
TO GATHER
FOOD!

NOT TO
HIDE!



IRRELEVANT.

WHAT
DO
YOU--?

WHATEVER OUR
PURPOSE IN LANDING--



--WE LAND
JUST THE SAME!

BY ALL
THE GODS
THAT BE!

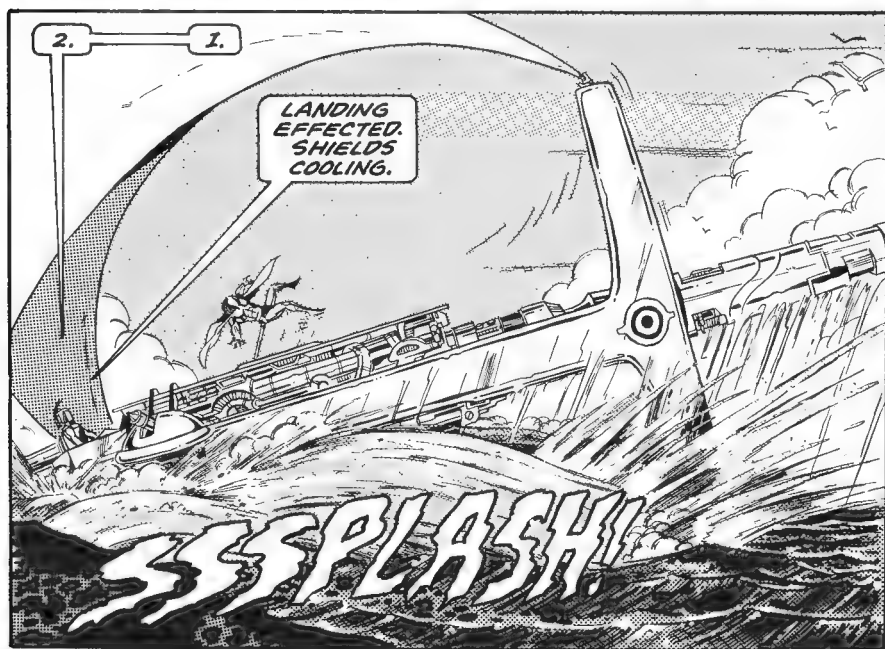
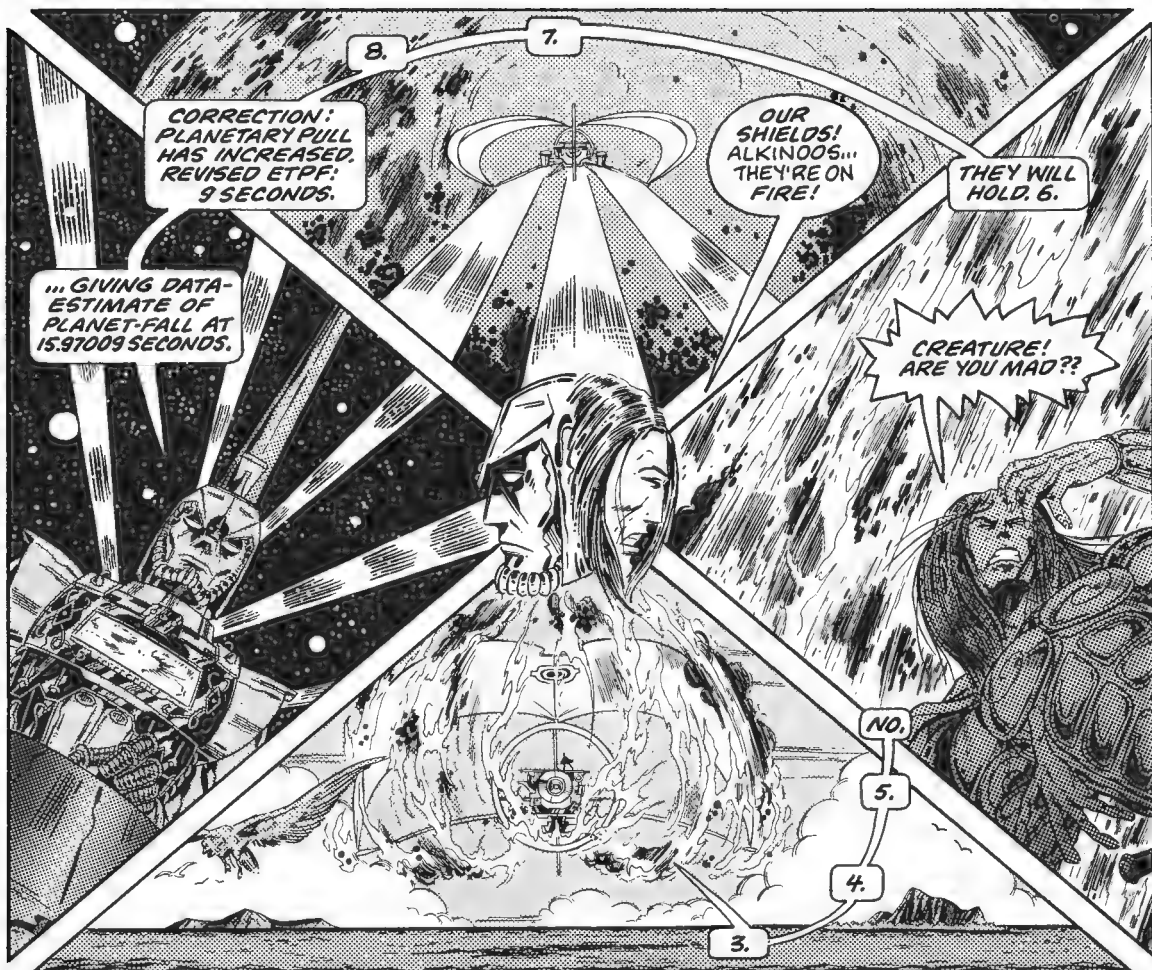
THE STAR ANNALS LIST
HER AS HAILILAE!

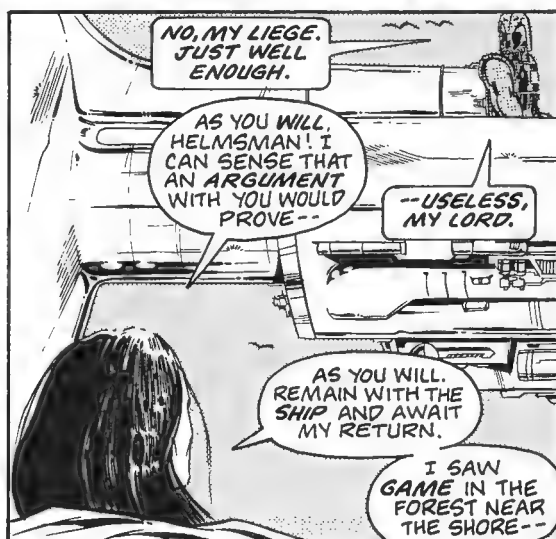
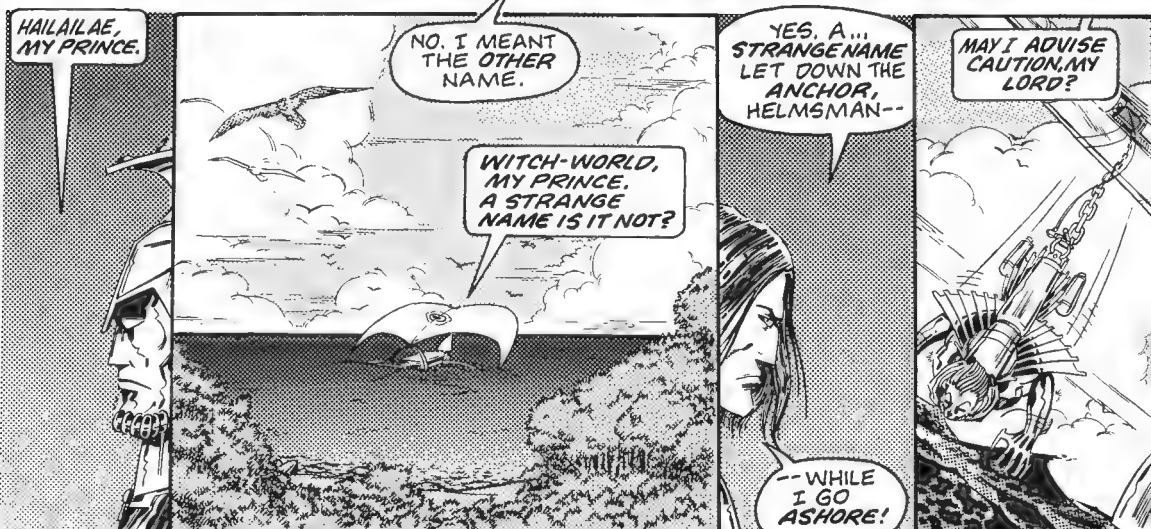
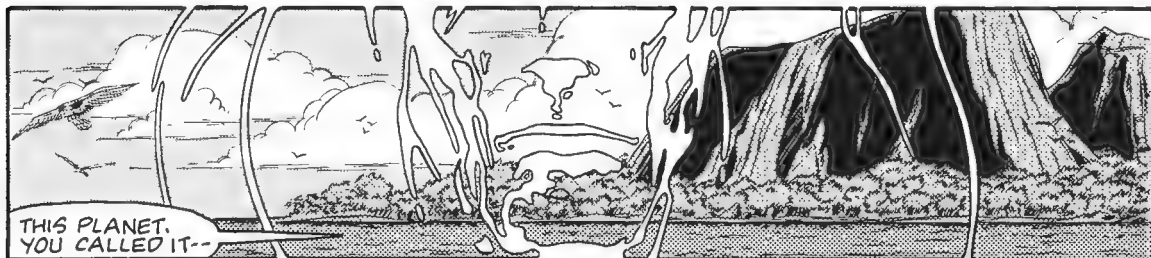
SHE IS POSSESSED OF
SIX OCEANS, FOUR LARGE
LAND MASSES IN HER
TEMPERATE ZONES, TWO
POLES, FROZEN OVER...

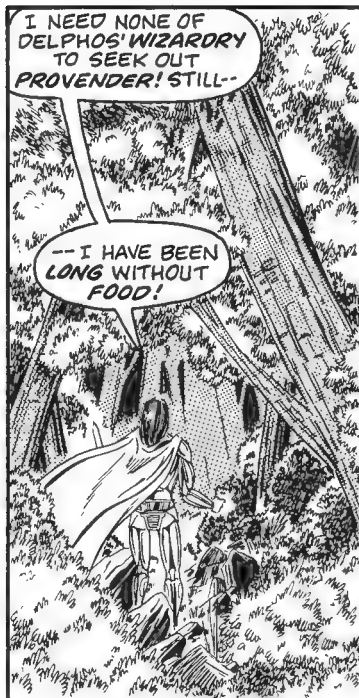
... AN ATMOSPHERE SUITABLE
FOR OXYGEN-BREATHING
LIFE-FORMS, AND IN SUFFIXED
CODINATION SHE IS ALSO
KNOWN AS...

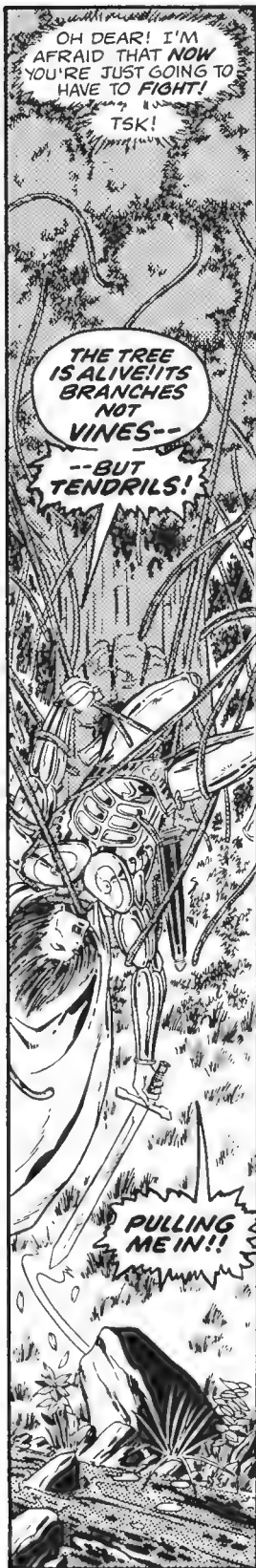
... WITCH-WORLD!!

OUR SHIP IS IN A
LANDING ORBIT,
CAUGHT IN HER
GRAVITATIONAL
PULL...









OH DEAR! I'M
AFRAID THAT **NOW**
YOU'RE JUST GOING TO
HAVE TO **FIGHT!**

TSK!

THE **TREE**
IS **ALIVE!** ITS
BRANCHES
NOT
VINES--

--BUT
TENDRILS!

**PULLING
ME IN!!**



BUT THOUGH MY **SWORD-
ARM BE HELD--** A PRINCE
OF THE REALM MUST NEEDS
BE AS SKILLED WITH
EITHER HAND.

THE BLADE'S
**SONIC
DISRUPTORS**
EASILY SEVER
THE ARMS OF
THE PLANT--

WREEE!

--AND
IT FEELS
THE
PAIN--

--FOR IT
OPENS WIDE
ITS MAW AND
SCREAMS!

YET STILL
IT **HOLDS ME!**
IT WILL NOT
YIELD!

REFUSING
TO RECOGNIZE
THAT IT IS
WAYFINDER WHO
IS THE **HUNTER**
THIS DAY--

--AND
ITSELF
THAT IS THE
PREY!

**SCREAM.
VEGETABLE--**

--FOR
VICTORY--
OF A SORT--

--IS
MINE!



VICTOR? YOU BATTER A POOR DEFENSELESS TREE MERELY ATTEMPTING TO DEFEND ITS WATERING RIGHTS--

--AND YOU CONCLUDE THAT THAT MAKES YOU A CONQUEROR?

THE VOICE AGAIN! THE SAME THAT TRIED TO WARN ME FROM DRINKING THE WATER!



YES-- AND I BLOODY WELL CAN'T DETERMINE WHY I BOTHERED!

THAT OLD TREE USED TO OBTAIN FISH FOR ME--

--AND, IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING--

-- YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE MUCH OF A REPLACEMENT OLD BEAN!



A... TALKING... ANIMAL...?



ALLOW ME TO CAUTION YOU AGAINST YOUR USE OF PERJORATIVES, OLD MAN!

ANIMAL I MAY BE--

--BUT IF YOU CLAIM TO BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE TOP OF THE EVOLUTIONARY LADDER--



-- LIFE AS WE KNOW IT MAY BE UP FOR GRABS!

I...

...APOLOGIZE, FRIEND.



JOLLY GOOD, THEN! PERHAPS I TOO WAS A BIT HASTY IN SLINGING THE PROVERBIAL MUD!

STILL--AMENDS MAY BE MADE! LET ME RETURN YOUR SWORD TO YOU--

--(I'LL LET YOU WIPE OFF THE SAP)--



--AND WE CAN PROCEED ON OUR WAY!

OLD BEAN!



ON OUR--?

OH, HAVE I JUMPED TOO HASTILY TO A CONCLUSION?

I ASSUMED YOU WERE LOST AND HUNGRY--

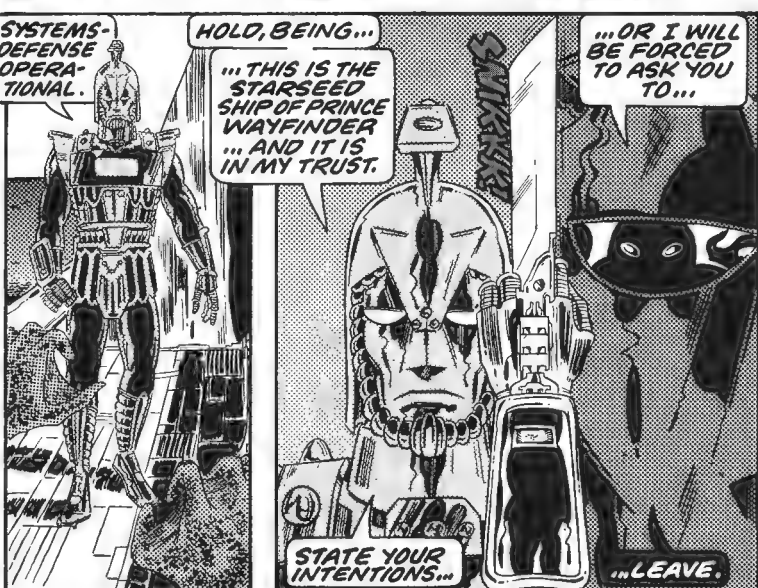
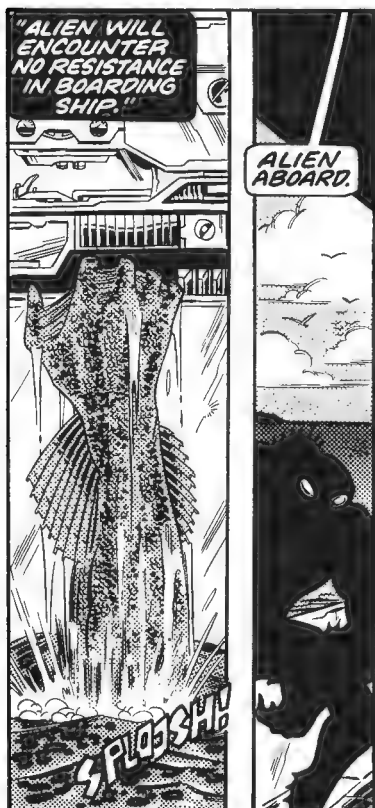
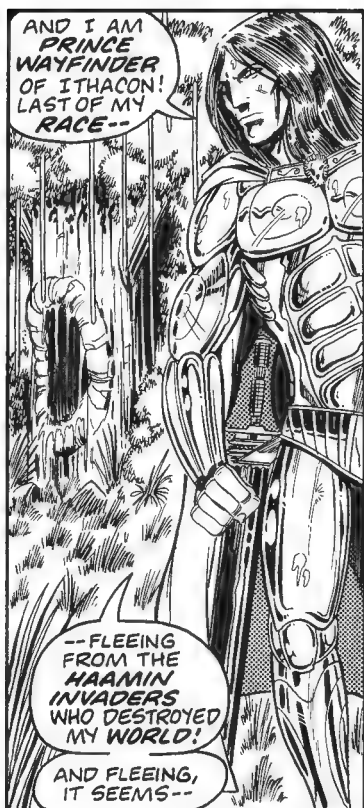


--AND WOULD BE DELIGHTED WERE I TO LEAD YOU TO DINNER!

UH-- GRUB! KIPPERS!

COULD USE SOME MYSELF!

COMING?





WAYFINDER, EH? WELL
WHOEVER NAMED YOU
WAS NO PROPHET,
OLD SOCK!

IN ALL RESPECT--I DOUBT
YOU COULD FIND YOUR WAY
OUT OF A FIELD OF DOON-
BOGGLES WERE THEY TO
DRAW YOU A MAP!



WHAT ARE...
BOONDOGGLES?

DOON,
OLD MAN!
DOON-
BOGGLES!

THEY ARE THOSE FLOWERS YOU
ARE IN THE ACT OF PLUCKING--



-- AND AS A CASE IN POINT
-- ILLUSTRATIVE OF YOUR
IGNORANCE OF THE
WAYS OF THE WORLD--

-- WHY ANY
PUP KNOWS
THAT THE
DOONBOGGLES
ARE GUARDED
BY --

-- THE
PLAGUEOSAUR!

ROOAR

BY MY
SWORD!

WHY DIDN'T
YOU WARN ME?!

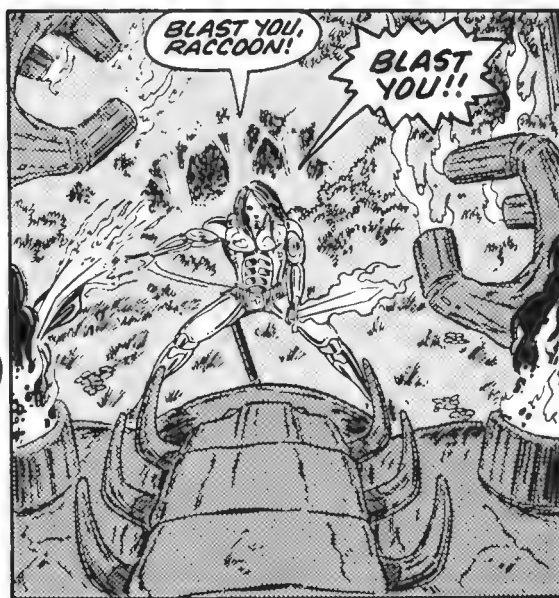


SCOW!

I SAY,
OLD MAN!

I'M NOT AN
INFORMATION
DISPENSARY?

ONE SHOULD
LOOK BEFORE
ONE PLUCKS,
AS IT WERE!



BLAST YOU,
RACCOON!

BLAST
YOU!!



NOT ME,
OLD MAN.

IT! YOU
MUST BLAST
IT!

LIKE
SO!!

SKREEE!

YOUR WEAPON
HAS HURT THE
BEAST,
RACCOON--

--BUT NOT
STOPPED IT!

BUT IN ME
IT WILL FIND MORE
THAN IT RECKONED
WITH--

NOW IT
COMES
FOR ME!!

--AS THE
SONIC CHARGE
IN MY BLADE
BUILDS UP
WITHIN ITS
SCALED
BODY--

--FINDING
FOR ITSELF
NO MEANS OF
EGRESS--

--UNTIL
ALL THAT
REMAINS
FOR IT TO
DO--



--IS
IMPLODE!!

TAKING YOUR
PLAGUEOSAUR
WITH IT!

IN YOUR OWN
WORDS, RACCOON--

--LIKE--

--SO!



JOLLY GOOD SHOW,
OLD BEAN! PERHAPS
THERE'S MORE TO
YOU THAN I FIRST
SURMISED!

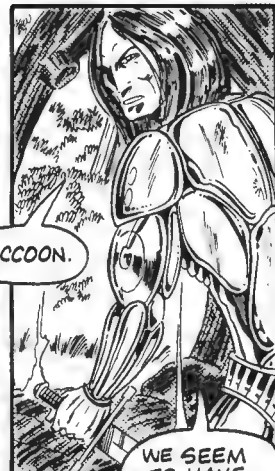
WELL,
HERE'S
DINNER!

DIG IN!



AND I'M SURE YOU
WON'T MIND IF I
LAY ETIQUETTE
ASIDE--

--AND "DIG IN"
WITH YOU?



RACCOON.

WE SEEM
TO HAVE
COMPANY!



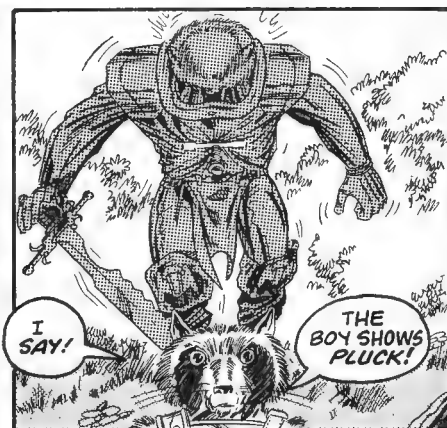
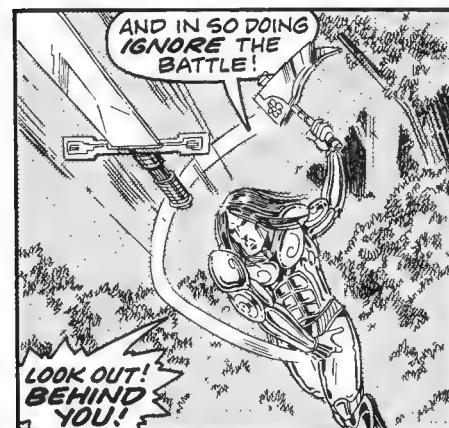
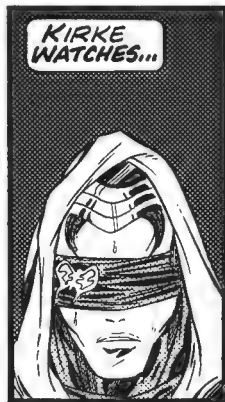
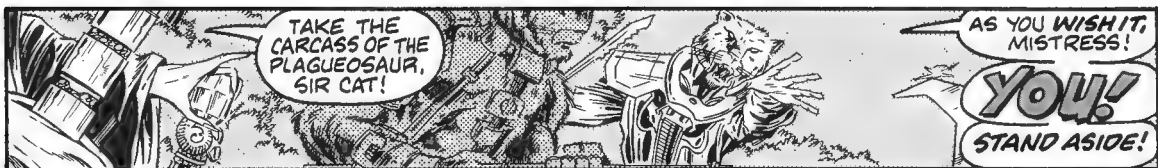
I AM--
KIRKE!



STAR-ANAL:
THE BOOK OF EARTH.

A BOOK WAYFINDER
HAD BEEN BROUGHT
UP ON A BOOK OF
MYTHS. KIRKE/CIRCE/
SEERESS WAS IN THAT
BOOK. A MYTH AND A...

WITCH!



... AND FROM THE GEM IT SCREAMS
BACK OUT INTO THE AIR ...

... FILLING THE
CLEARING WITH
FORCE!

THE BATTLE IS DONE!
THE MEAT FROM THE SLAIN
BEAST IS MINE-- FOR
SACRIFICIAL PURPOSES--
FOR THE FOREST IN
WHICH IT WAS SLAIN
IS MINE!

IN THIS I WILL
BROOK NO
DISOBEDIANCE!

MY... SENSES
TELL ME THERE
IS AN OUTWORLDER
PRESENT! THAT--

--INTERESTS
ME!

YOU WILL
COME ALONG
WITH MY
KNIGHTS--
PEACEABLY--

--OR YOU WILL
DIE! THE CHOICE
IS YOURS!

QUITE A
STICKY WICKET,
EH, JUNIOR?

THEN WE
MUST DO AS
SHE ASKS
RACCOON--
FOR NOW!

THIS IS THE SECOND
INSTALLMENT OF THE
SWORD IN THE STAR-- AND
MAYBE THE LAST! ONLY
YOUR LETTERS, AND
MOSTLY, YOUR SUPPORT CAN
BRING IT BACK FOR A
THIRD TRY. IT'S UP TO
YOU, PILGRIMS!

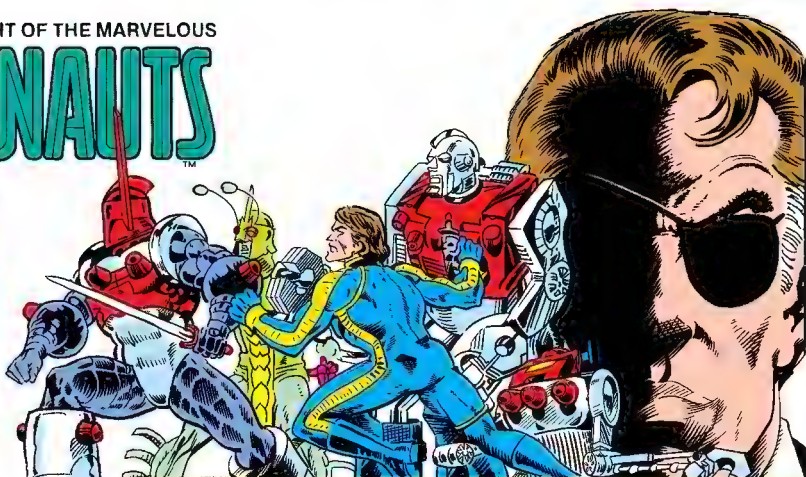
CAN THE COMBINED MIGHT OF THE MARVELOUS

MICRONAUTS

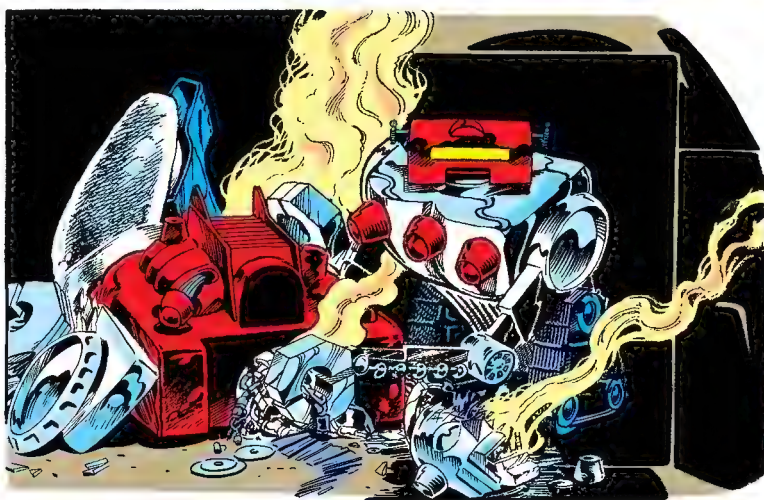
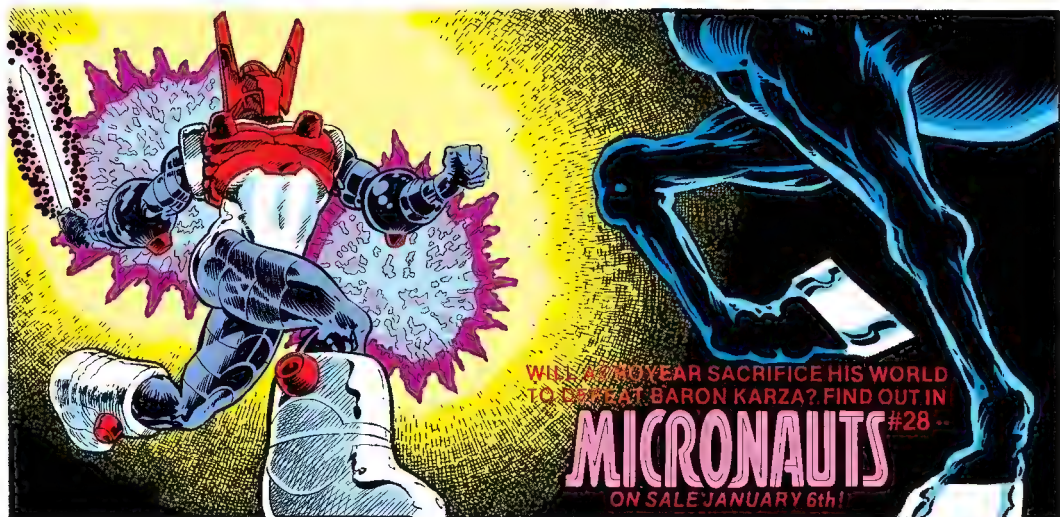
AND



SAVE THE EARTH
FROM A MENACE
OUT OF INNER SPACE?



FIND OUT IN **MICRONAUTS** #26 -- ON SALE NOW!
#27 ON SALE DECEMBER 8th



BIOTRON DEAD?

WHO KILLED HIM?

FIND OUT IN
MICRONAUTS

#29! — ON SALE
FEBRUARY 3rd!

WORLD COLOR

TITLE & NUMBER

COPY AREA

TRIM

COPY AREA

MARVEL®
COMICS
GROUP50¢
CC21
SEPT
02714THIS MARVEL® COMIC COULD
BE WORTH \$2500 TO YOU!

(DETAILS INSIDE)



THE MICRONAUTS™



STARTING THIS ISSUE:
TALES FROM THE
MICROVERSE!



COPY AREA

TITLE MICRONAUTS
NO. -21-
MONTH SEPT

SCHEDULE may

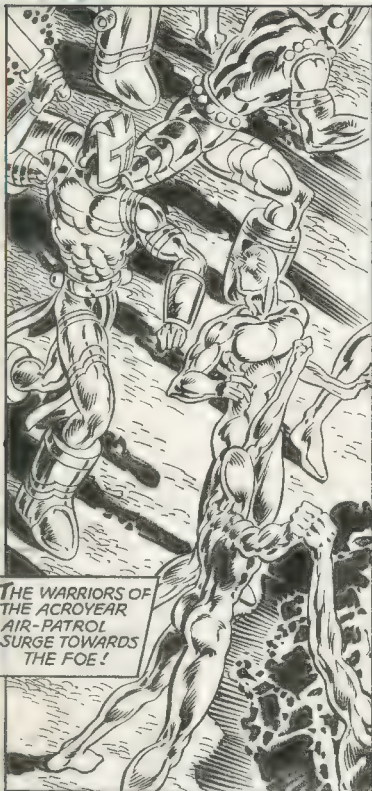
ARTIST GOLDEN

6/13/80 X101/2

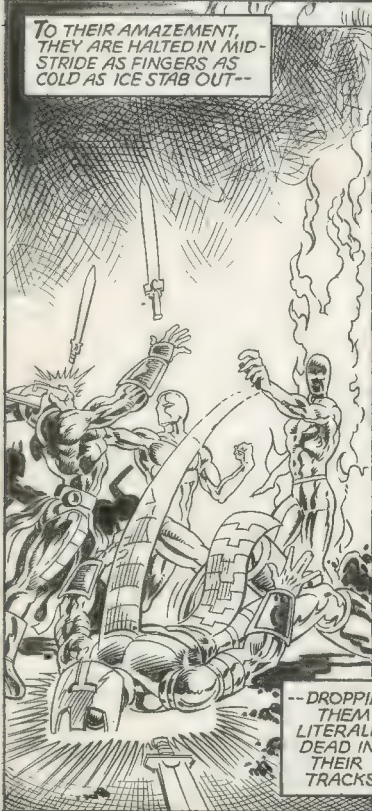
COPY AREA

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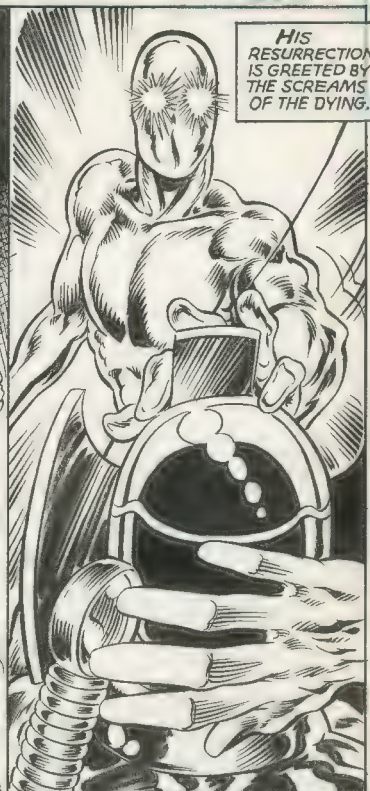
THE WARRIORS OF
THE ACROYEAR
AIR-PATROL
SURGE TOWARDS
THE FOE!



TO THEIR AMAZEMENT,
THEY ARE HALTED IN MID-
STRIDE AS FINGERS AS
COLD AS ICE STAB OUT--

-- DROPPING THEM
LITERALLY
DEAD IN
THEIR
TRACKS.

MEANWHILE, AN ARMORED
ALBINO ACROYEAR RISES
FROM A CRYPT HIDDEN
WITHIN THE CRATER FROM
WHICH THE RAGING FIRES LEAP!



HIS
RESURRECTION
IS GREETED BY
THE SCREAMS
OF THE DYING...



...A FITTING
WELCOME FOR
ONE WHO IS
DEAD HIMSELF...

...ONE WHOSE EYES
NO LONGER MIRROR
A LIVING SOUL!

I AM TIME TRAVELER--
EMISSARY OF THE ENIGMA
FORCE--YOUR GUIDE TO
EVENTS TRANSPIRING IN
THE MICROVERSE!

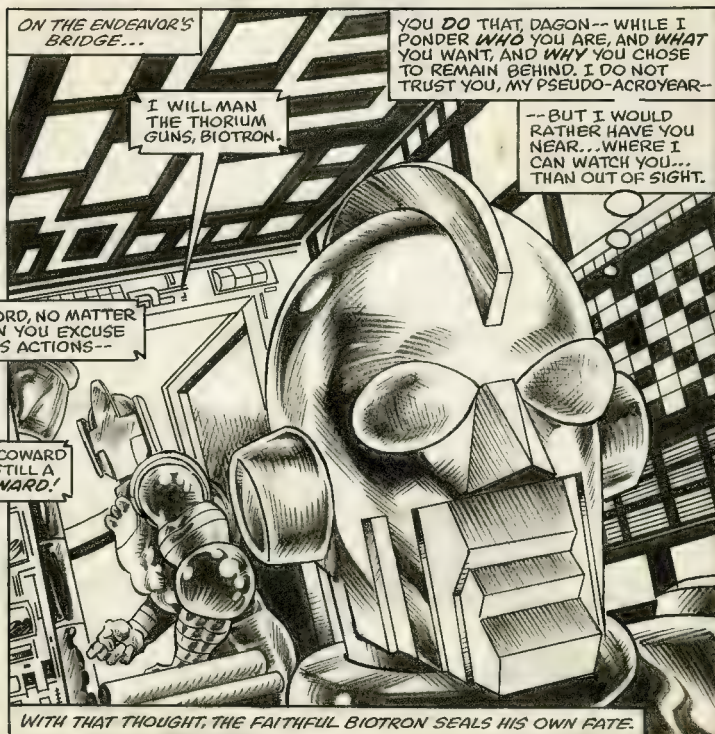
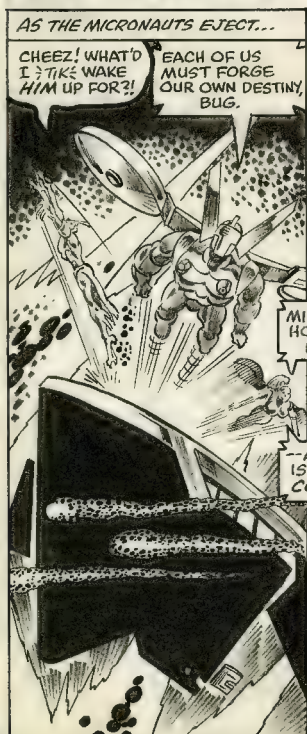
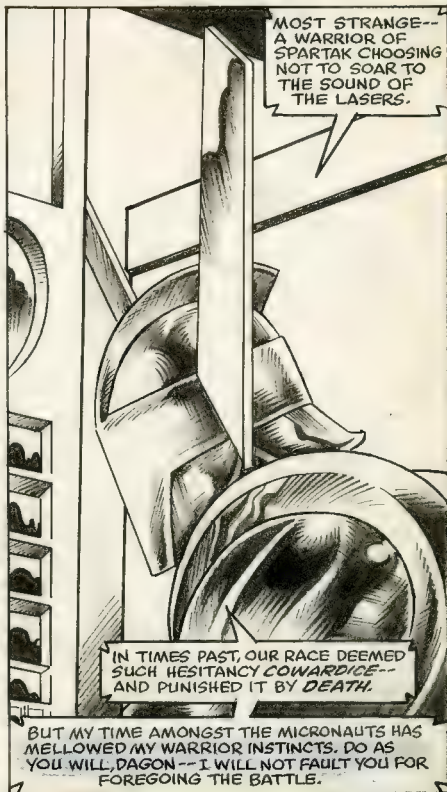
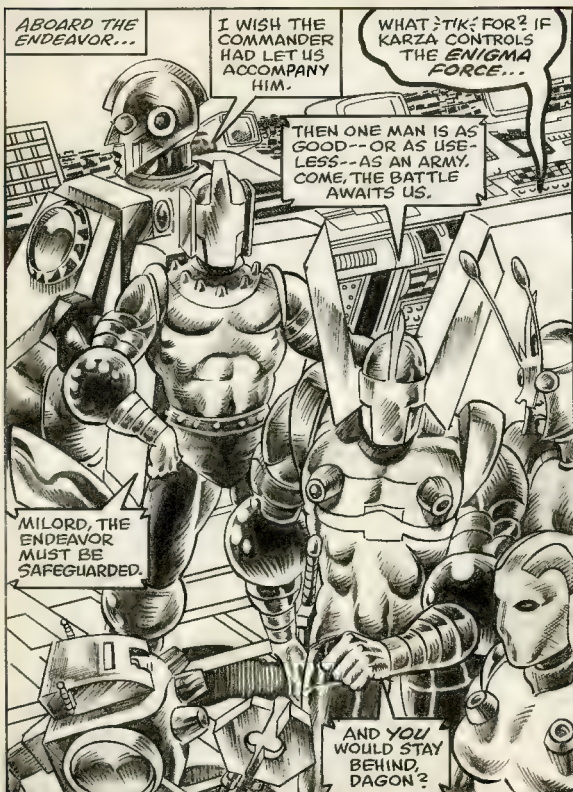
LET MY MIND
NOW TOUCH
YOURS WITH VISIONS
OF A BATTLE
BEING WAGED
BETWEEN AEGYPTAN
AND CENTAURI
IN THE VAST
SANDZONE OF
HOMEWORLD!

TALES OF THE MICROVERSE!

SCREAMING AS
THEY SCENT BLOOD,
FIERCE DESERT
OSTRAS BEAR THE
AEGYPTIAN PRINCE
PHAROID AND HIS
DESERT DEMONS
INTO BATTLE!

RIDE THE
CENTAURI
DOWN, LADS!
THEY HAVE
CAPTURED A
HUMAN MAIDEN
AND *WE* MUST
FREE HER!

EGYPTA!



HIS HYDRA ALLIES THROWN ON THE DEFENSIVE BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE MICRONAUTS' UNEXPECTED ASSAULT, BARON KARZA FINDS HIMSELF FACING AN ENRAGED ACRO-YEAR!

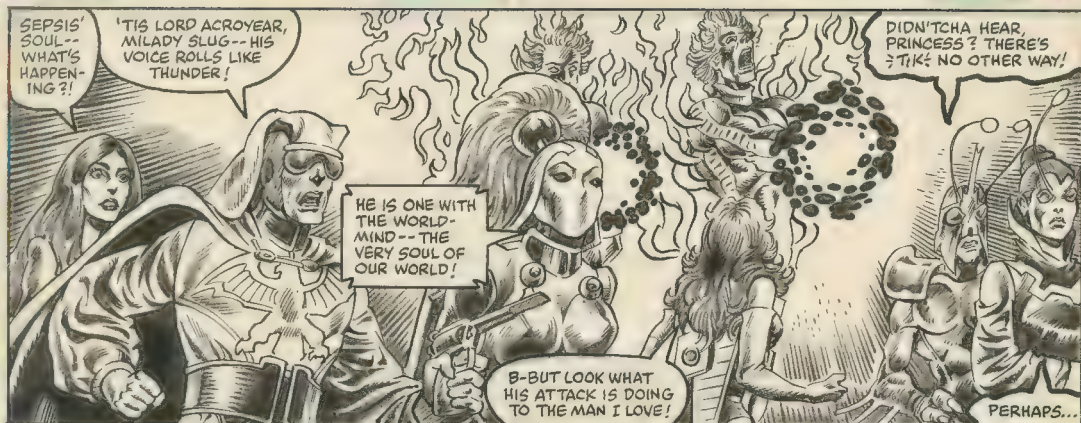
WHILST MY FELLOW MICRONAUTS ENDEAVOR TO FREE COMMANDER RANN, LET US SEE HOW EVIL INCARNATE RESISTS THE ATTACK OF AN ARMORED ACRO-YEAR WARRIOR!

YOU ARE EITHER MAD--OR FOOLISH--SON OF SPARTAK!

BARON KARZA IS NO MERE MAN TO BE FOUGHT WITH WORDS OR WEAPONS! WITH THE MIND OF COMMANDER RANN ADDING TO MY OWN INCREDIBLE ENERGIES THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE --

-- I AM WELL NIGH INVINCIBLE!

IF YOUR WORDS BE TRUE, THEN MY DEATH IS A CERTAINTY!



ALTHOUGH THE BATTLE RAGES ON EARTH, THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE WORLD-MIND FROM SPARTAK CAUSES THAT PLANET TO UNDERGO THE DEATH THROES OF GREAT GEOLOGIC UPHEAVALS!

WELL, THAT'S ABOUT IT. WE LOST A LOT OF GOOD AGENTS-- AN' I HEAR TELL THE MICROVERSE LOST EVEN **MORE** BRINGIN' ABOUT KARZA'S DEFEAT. THAT'S WAR-- A HELLUVA WAY TA MAKE A LIVIN'.

AMEN, NICK.

AWRIGHT, DUM DUM, YA OLD WALRUS-- LET'S DISPOSE A OUR DEAD AN' FIGGER OUT HOW WE LET THIS HAPPEN IN THE FIRST PLACE.

CONGRESS WANTS A REPORT, NICK. THEY HEARD...

RUMORS, GABE-- ALL RUMORS.

IF THEY DON'T BUY THAT, TELL 'EM TA GO... HANG!

THERE IS NO LAYING OF BLAME... NO RECRIMINATIONS. NICK FURY KNOWS HIS AGENTS GAVE THEIR ALL, AND THAT NOW MUST BE A TIME OF REST AND REORGANIZATION.

THUS DOES THIS LEADER OF MEN HOLD THEIR LOYALTY-- AND THEIR LOVE-- AGAINST BATTLES TO COME.

ON THE HELICARRIER'S DECK, THE DENIZENS OF THE MICROVERSE MOURN THEIR DEAD...

OH, BIOTRON, YOU OLD RUSTPOT, YOU WERE ALWAYS MORE SCHOLAR THAN WARRIOR...

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DIE WHEN BARON KARZA'S DOG SOLDIERS BOARDED OUR SHIP, THE ENDEAVOR??

MEBBE TIK: 'CAUSE OL' DAGON* HERE DIDN'T TIK: GUARD BIOTRON LIKE HE WAS S'POSED TA DO!

THE ATTACK CAME TOO FAST, BUG. THERE WAS NO TIME...

*THE ACROYEAR ON BOARD THE HELI-CARRIER WHOM BUG FREED FROM SUSPENDED ANIMATION IN ISSUE #26-L.

WARRIORS TIK: MAKE TIME-- LIKE QUEEN ESMERA, OF MY WORLD, KALIKLAK-- HURLIN' HERSELF ONTA KARZA'S BACK AN' WEAKEN IN HIM WITH HER SUICIDE-STING SO ACROYEAR COULD TIK: FINISH HIM OFF!



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THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS

A Time of Darkness there will be:
Salvation lies in this Mystic Key!



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MONTH

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JULY

SCHEDULE

ARTIST

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Space Glider. Marionette. Acroyear. Bug. Microtron. Biotron. They came from inner space—six champions sworn to free their beloved Microverse from the tyrannical rule of the evil Baron Karza!

**Stan Lee
PRESENTS:**

THE MICRONAUTS!

ON THE UPPER FLOORS OF A GREENWICH VILLAGE TOWNHOUSE, DR. STRANGE, A MYSTIC FROM OUR TIME, MEDITATES ON AN INSCRIPTION ON AN OBELISK CARVED IN AN ARCAIC AND ANCIENT PAST.

IN HIS EFFORT TO STAVE OFF SOME AS-YET-UNKNOWN FUTURE DISASTER, HE IS UNAWARE THAT, IN A SUBMOLECULAR REALM CALLED THE MICROVERSE, THAT FUTURE IS ALREADY COMING TO PASS!

SPACE GLIDER

MARIONETTE

BUG

ACROYEAR

MICROTRON

PHAROID

MY BODY LIES OVER
OCEANIA

BILL MANTLO & PAT BRODERICK
WRITER - STORYTELLERS - ARTIST

DANNY BULANADI
INKER

JOE ROSEN, LETTERS
BOB SHAREN, COLORS

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
DA BOSS

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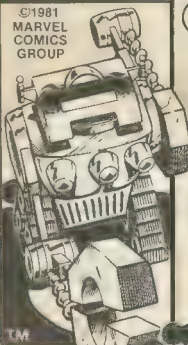
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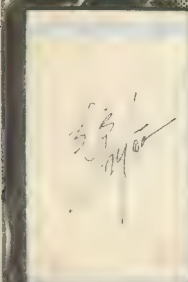
THEY CAME FROM INNER SPACE

THE MICRONAUTS



STRANDED IN AN UNCHARTED
JUNGLE, HIS EYES SEARED
SIGHTLESS IN AN ACCIDENT,
ARCOYEAR BATTLES THE
DEADLIEST THREAT OF ALL

BOB LAYTON



DEVIL OF TROPICA!

FOLD COPY

TITLE
NO.
MONTH

SCHEDULE MK7

ARTIST

6'13/16" x 11 1/2"

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STAN LEE
PRESENTS:

THE MICRONAUTS!

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NOT WISHING TO HURT DEVIL, YET NOT WISHING TO BE HURT HIMSELF, ACROYEAR BLINDLY HURLS THE ENRAGED MIRTHRIAN FROM HIM! DEVIL STRIKES THE THIRD AND FINAL SHELL ATOP THE TOWER TERRACE, SHATTERING IT...

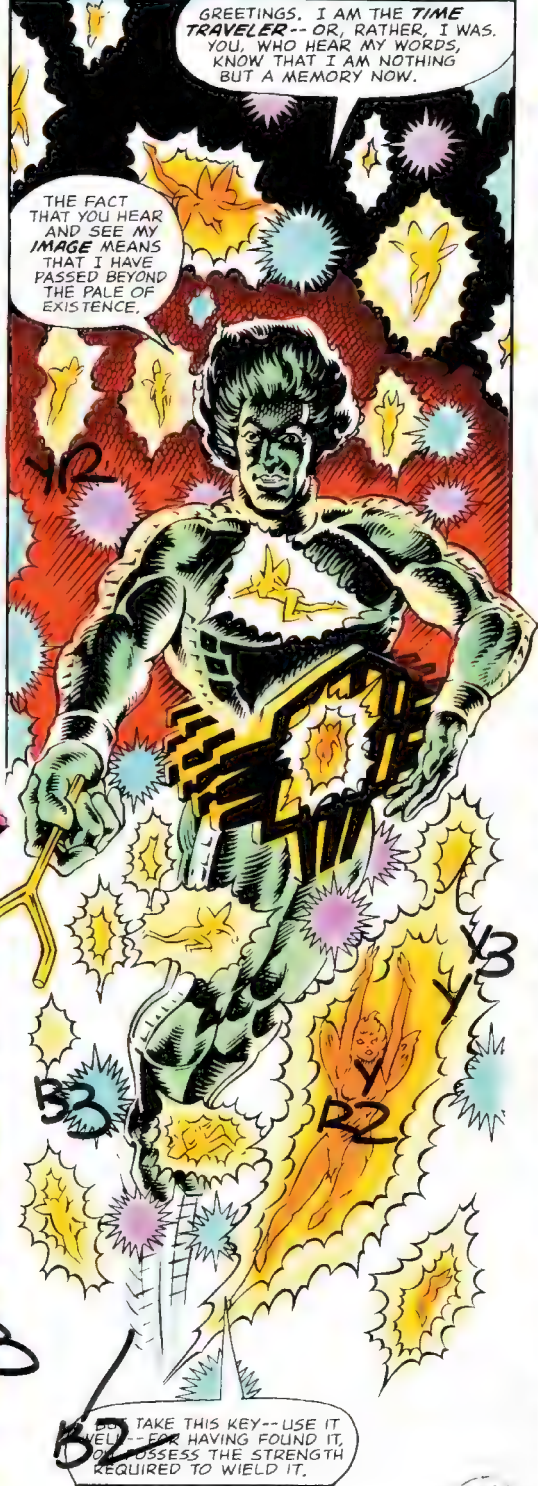


IMMEDIATELY, THE NIGHT IS FILLED WITH A GENTLE GREEN GLOW, AND A SONG SO SWEET AND AS MYSTERIOUS AS THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES PERVADES THE ATMOSPHERE.

IN THE CENTER OF THE GLOW, SURROUNDED BY SINGING FIREFLYTES, IS A VISION ACROYEAR KNOWS WELL -- FOR IT IS ONE OF THE EMERALD EMISSARIES OF THE AWESOME ENIGMA FORCE!

GREETINGS. I AM THE **TIME TRAVELER**-- OR, RATHER, I WAS. YOU, WHO HEAR MY WORDS, KNOW THAT I AM NOTHING BUT A MEMORY NOW.

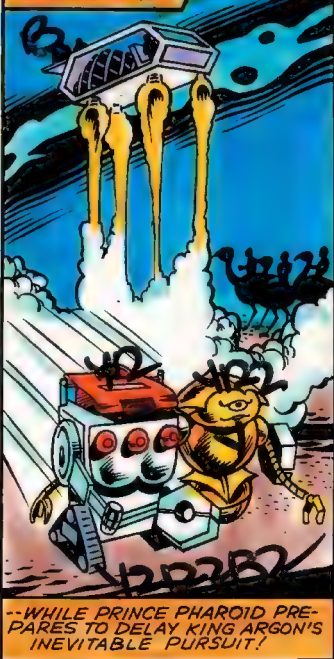
THE FACT THAT YOU HEAR AND SEE MY **IMAGE** MEANS THAT I HAVE PASSED BEYOND THE PALE OF EXISTENCE.



TAKE THIS KEY--USE IT WELL--FOR HAVING FOUND IT, YOU POSSESS THE STRENGTH REQUIRED TO WIELD IT.

MICRONAUTS

THEN, AS THE ASTROSTATION RISES, MICRON AND NANOTRON VISUALIZE ACROSS THE UNIMAGINABLE STRETCHES OF SANDZONE--



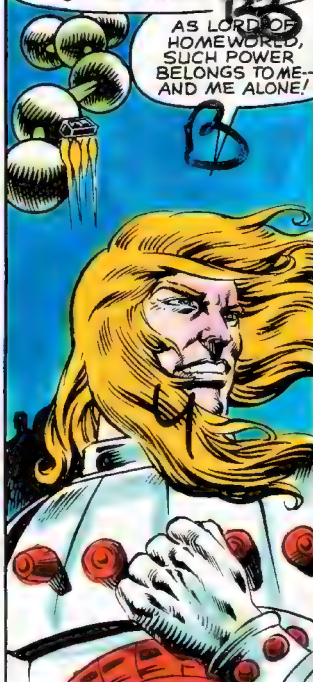
--WHILE PRINCE PHAROID PREPARES TO DELAY KING ARGON'S INEVITABLE PURSUIT!

SUDDENLY, FORCE COMMANDER'S DOG SOLDIERS EMERGE FROM AEGYPTA AND ENGAGE PRINCE PHAROID AND HIS DESERT DEMONS IN A BRIEF BUT BITTER BATTLE...



THE MICRONAUTS ARE GETTING AWAY!

THEY NEED TO DEADLINE, TO ATTAIN THE POWER OF THE ENIGMA FORCE IN VIGOR OF THE THREE KINGS



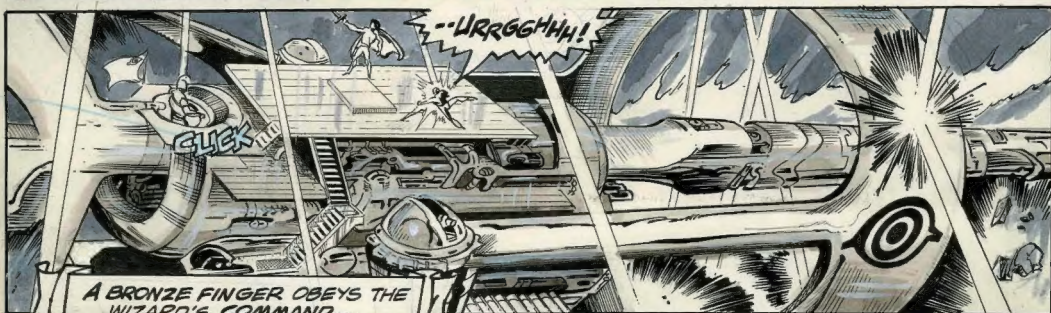
AS LORD OF HOMEWORLD, SUCH POWER BELONGS TO ME-- AND ME ALONE!

THIS I DECLARE THE MICRONAUTS AND ALL WHO BE-FRIEND THEM OUTLAWS AND TRAITORS TO THE REALM!



NOTHING SHALL KEEP THEM FROM MY VENGEANCE!

NEXT ISSUE THE ORIGIN OF THE MICROVERSE!



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THE ORIGINAL MARVEL YEARS



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THIS BATTLEFIELD, EARTH
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IT'S BACK TO HOMEWORLD FOR THE ORIGIN OF THE MICRONAUTS!



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